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A Note On Style

The variety of approaches to writing and design in this issue reflects the *Circle's* function as a laboratory publication. Although each piece was reviewed by staff members and representatives of the Editorial Board, the appearance of any article, story, poem, drawing, or photograph does not necessarily indicate unanimous critical approval.

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Poetry throughout the issue.

RUSH!

A Circle research team surveyed women involved in sorority rush. Some of the reports received were scandalous.

It happens mainly to naive teen-aged girls away from home for the first time. For some, it's exciting and they like it; for others, there is an irrational loss of self-esteem. Its roots lie in rituals practiced for so long the practitioners are often unsure of why they do it.

We're not talking about white slavery, nor some pagan rite. We're talking about a firmly-embedded fact of collegiate life.

This is sorority rush.

Eight days before fall classes started this year, 1,025 young women came to Auburn for six days chocked full of 34 parties, nine of them in one day. More than a third of the girls—344—either dropped out, or, in most cases, were forced out.

Some say the painful feelings of rejection and the ego damage are self-inflicted, and those who think the system unfair need not participate in it.

Critics of sorority rush reply that rush is overseen by personnel paid for by the university and it takes place in university facilities, largely donated free. The university, they say, should not sponsor a rush that is unnecessarily cruel and unfair. And, they add, many of the girls have little choice about whether to go through rush, but are instead dupes of parental and peer pressure.

The Circle surveyed pledges, sorority sisters and girls cut out of rush. The results, while in part are apparent testimony to sorority loyalty, indicated a significant desire to change the rush system.

"Unless a girl is an outstanding beauty or has had great experience at selling herself, the possibilities of making it through the week are doubtful," reported one sorority sister. "The age-old concept 'it's not what you know but who you know' is also very applicable here. 'Beauty is only skin deep' is yet another cliché which is forgotten during this week.

"It is not feasible for two girls to get to know enough about each other in a week's time to judge whether she, the rushee, should pledge or not."

That week starts off with two days of "ice-water teas," during which every rushee visits every sorority. Next is "light and lively day," in which the sisters sing songs to rushees who visit nine sororities during the day. "Light and lively" parties, like every party from here on in, are by invitation only. A rushee may attend five parties on "color day," where sisters woo rushees with skits. A rushee can go to three parties on "theme day," another costume-drama affair where sisters scrutinize visitors, deciding who to invite to the deadly-serious preferential parties the next day.

Less than half the girls at a sorority's preferential parties, after surviving five days of the whittling-down, will receive "bids," the invitation to join. Those who get bids get them in envelopes on the aptly named "squeal day," which sees hundreds of mostly screaming college students running to sorority chapter rooms to accept.

According to a former rush counselor,

a resident advisor to the rushees during the week, some sororities "lead girls on . . . carry them through the entire week and drop them the last two days—this was *bad* on the girls."

"Cutting the last day is bad," said another sister, "especially when they tell you that they like you, etc., and act like they want you."

"Some sororities carried girls to the last day and then cut them," wrote one indignant pledge. "I wasn't affected personally, but I saw what it did to other girls and I don't think it was right."

Another pledge said those practices made the sororities seem "uncaring and cold."

Apparently, though, the sorority members aren't entirely to blame. The survey yields several reports of various degrees of alumni control of the rush proceedings.

The 16 percent of the sisters who said alumni have the final say in who is pledged may attest to more pervasive alumni control than first glance indicates. In several instances, girls confessed alumni had final say while other members of the same sorority said they did not.

Thirty-one percent of the respondents said alumni could override decisions on a particular rushee. Again, testimony from members of the same sororities differed.

In several sororities, a rushee needs an alumni recommendation to even be considered. "I really wanted a girl," says a sorority sister, "and because no alum knew her we couldn't get a recom-

mendation and therefore we couldn't pledge her."

Says a girl in another sorority: "Alums kept us from getting girls we really wanted by not writing recommendations."

"If the alums negative rec a girl, no matter if she's your best friend, there's nothing you can do about it," said still another.

Rush is governed by a strict—though not strictly-enforced—set of rules. A rushee, for example, may not be contacted by a sorority member before rush begins. A rushee cannot be told at a party that she will be invited back the next day. The survey indicates "dirty rushing," as rush lingo calls it, is pervasive.

Only 2 percent of the sisters questioned admitted to dirty rushing. But, again, that small figure represented a cross-section of sororities. And a much larger percentage—20 percent—of pledges said "dirty rushing" tactics had been used on

them.

Many of the sisters complained about illicit rushing practices for some rather unusual reasons. "In rush there is a lot of dirty rushing," said one girl. "Our sorority doesn't do this and I feel sometimes it is to our disadvantage."

Said another sister, "I was dirty rushed when I went through . . . and their promises were broken."

The 1978 rush chairman for one sorority said she had no doubt that dirty rushing goes on, and said she issued strict orders against it. She acknowledged it put her sorority at a disadvantage.

A typical "dirty rushing" anecdote: "During the summer before rush, a Phi Mu came over to my house and told me all about them and during rush they told me they would see me the next day and then they cut me," reported one sister. "Later on another Phi Mu told me that the girl who had come over told them something about me which was totally untrue . . . now you'd have to pay me to

be a Phi Mu."

Beyond the seemingly inhumane formal structure of sorority rush (one survey respondent branded rush "a formal fake"), many have questioned the values and priorities the system fosters.

Twenty-eight percent of the sisters questioned said a girl from a distant state would have little or no chance to pledge her sorority. Six percent said they preferred to pledge a bored, disinterested, bland conversationalist who was gorgeous instead of a vivacious but less attractive girl.

Twenty-two percent of the pledges surveyed admitted they were attracted to their sorority by the physical beauty of the sisters, while 39 percent said the key selling point was the sorority's reputation. More than half said contact with a particular member of the sorority was decisive.

"Chapter attitudes can easily become too narrow-minded as some sororities are pushed to have only beauties in order to



illustration by Dennas Davis

be popular on campus," wrote one sister. "I like to accept people for what they are on the inside—their inner beauty, which is a fault during rush as everyone becomes a fake self."

There are other well-known, oft-ridiculed customs associated with sorority rush, like the frequently-ignored silence rules prohibiting rushees from talking to anyone not part of rush.

Being a "legacy," the relative of a sorority sister is often a nearly sure-fire way of being pledged. At least one rushee, however, found that's not always the case. She was cut by her sister's sorority, and eventually was cut out of rush completely.

"Other sororities don't ever look at you if you have a sister in a sorority," she moaned.

SOLUTIONS

The survey respondents offered myriad solutions. Some wanted elimination of the silence rules, others wanted better enforcement. Some wanted a longer rush week, others wanted it shortened. Some girls wanted more cutting earlier to end the practice stringing girls along until the final day.

Many complained about girls being cut while only seven of fifteen sororities pledged their quota. Panhellenic advisor

Emily Leischuck said some sororities prefer to opt for quantity instead of quality. Still, filling quotas, it was suggested, would eliminate some—not all—of the heartbreak.

Perhaps the most frequent suggestion was to replace the current system with "open rush" like fraternities have. Girls would have more to judge sororities on than a week of contrived images, and likewise for sororities—assessment of the rushees. Besides, with Title Nine, should anyone decide to take issue, that might be the only way . . . unless someone wants to make fraternities hold "ice water teas."

Thoughts

A friend is an extension of everything good.
And a reflection of all you admire.

A person cannot claim true independence,
Only a lesser dependency.

My most important thought today
Is less than a memory tomorrow.

Silence is a beautiful language,
Only if you understand the message.

Sitting close to a person in silence
Soaking up the warmth of wordless songs—
This is Love.

Nancy King

The day is at end and so am I.
Happiness is plentiful as the worth in my pockets;
For they are empty.
My thoughts are like the last quarter moon
Caged in the blackest night.
The moon understands my loneliness,
But keeps her distance . . .

Mitch Johnson

Reality Is Where You Write It

And so it seems I write only of
many pinnacled mountains
of trees in forests
of rain falling
and of brightly colored pebbles
whose images are blurred
by the happy rushing current of the cold stream.
(She looks down at them from
the little wooden bridge and sometimes
puts her feet in the water and
the sun sets but if you don't watch
it goes away. It makes the water
even prettier, kind of pink, like the sky.)

That's what I write about.

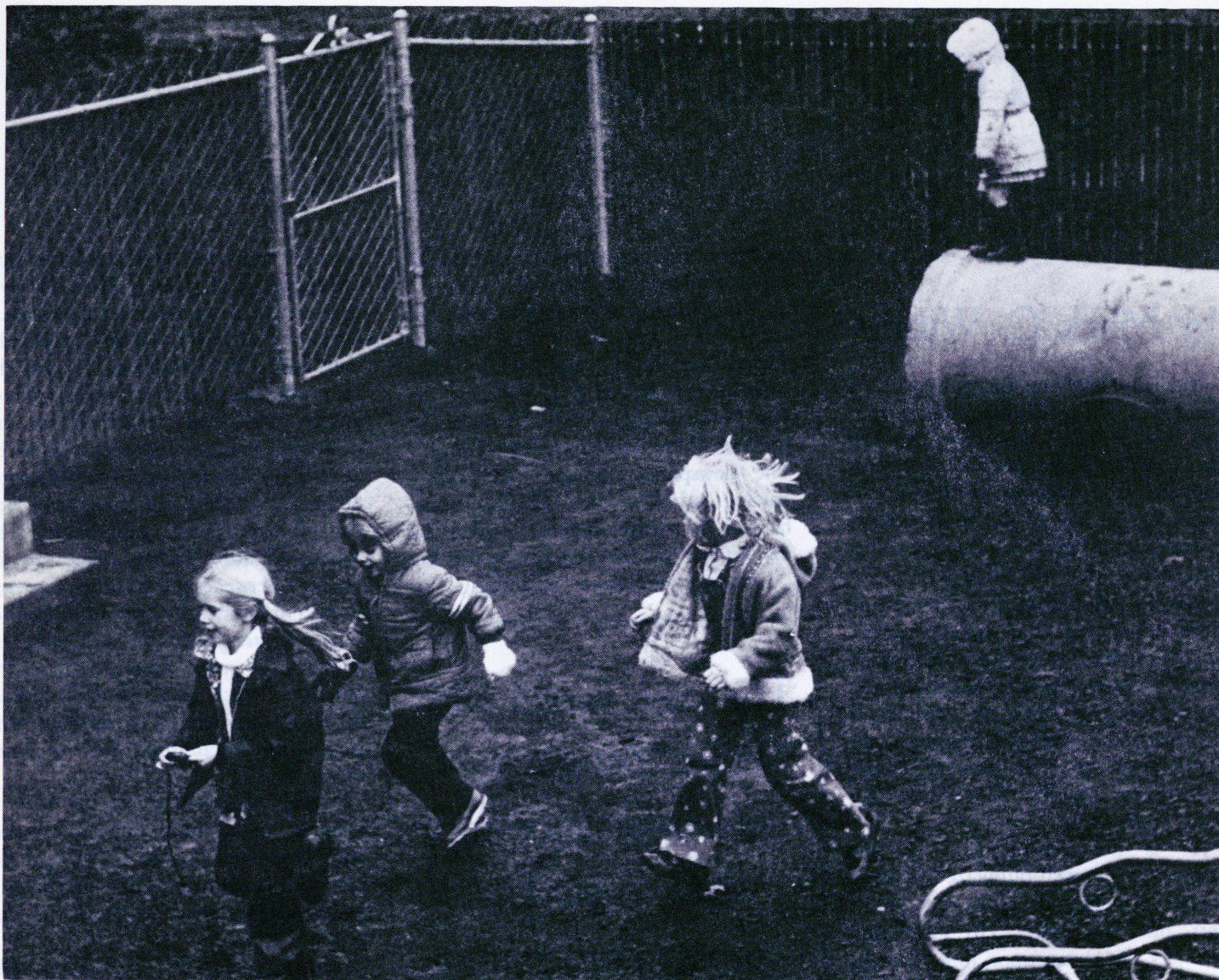
And when she got home her mother said,
"Well you're back in reality now."

Sleeping in the bowed down grass,
sometimes the deer with velvety antlers come
"While they were trying to get a suntan
I was eating snow and picking flowers,"
she thought to herself.

And when she got home
nothing seemed particularly real

And it seems I write only of mountains . . .

Chavawn Woodall



Young people in the park

With legs too long
for swings too low
we straddle concrete animals
whose rigid backs endure
crushing exuberance
of straight bodies, boundless,
weightless within our age.

Inside the city's simian house
monkey cousins mirror our kind

tugging, shoving, with faces
so similar and too familiar.
Old man rhesus bares his behind
when we children snigger
at his shrivelness
and the stilted way
he shuffles
across the hard slab floor
in an arthritic soft-shoe.

Disturbing dust onward we race
and reach a swiveling disc, rigged

as a roulette wheel coaxing a gamble.
We offer and bet on ourselves.
Sinking to supineness we discover
life's gravity, an awesome weight
as limbs grow leaden, dropping onto the plate.
Above us a vortex sucks cypress trees down
its dizzy circle concealing darkness unknown
its chaos nauseating some.
The spin ends.
From the park we, slightly sick and bent,
slowly go, supported on one another's shoulders.

Mark Willis

photo by Bruce Hyer

Myron Farber

by Mark C. Winne

His name is Myron Farber and he's a bearded, slight man with rumpled suits and graying hair. He seems, at first glance, an unlikely hero, and even more unlikely as a rallying point for the underdogs in one of the most decisive and clear-cut fights for freedom since The Constitution was penned.

But he *has* become that hero, and more importantly that rallying point. And after the first glance he seems no longer unlikely. He is a valued reporter for the *New York Times*, one of the most influential and principled papers in the world, and he is a sincere, mostly unassuming, vividly but mildly eloquent spokesman.

He is not self-righteous as the demagogues in well-publicized crusades like his are wont to be. At least he didn't start out that way. His newfound notoriety was thrust upon him, and for him to shun it would have been sinful.

In 1975 Farber was investigating a dead-end campaign-financing story when a tipster called the *Times* about 30 to 40 allegedly suspicious deaths that had occurred 10 years earlier in the Bergen County (N.J.) Hospital. After three months of investigation, Farber's first stories appeared about the deaths. Reportedly the stories, and, Farber said, a document he turned over to the district attorney, led to the exhuming of five bodies and eventually to murder charges against Dr. Mario Jascalevich, who, the prosecution alleged, had killed several patients with injections of a somewhat mysterious drug called curare.

Largely through Farber's investigation, one of the biggest crime stories of the year was heating up, and, as was routine since he'd been with it since it

began unfolding, Farber expected to follow the case into the trial.

"I presumed I was going to cover the trial, but I was put on the defense witness list," he said, adding that he was consequently barred from covering the case "even though I knew more about the case than anybody at the *Times*." The newspaper appealed the ruling barring Farber but lost. He found out, he said, how easily defense lawyers can manipulate trial coverage just by putting "a reporter who knows something" on

His case ranks with Peter Zenger's in its importance to a free American press. Farber and three of the nation's top press legal experts herein talk about what has happened and what may happen.

the witness list. But that was only the beginning.

Farber, who told the *Circle* he still will not comment on Jascalevich's guilt or innocence (the physician was found not guilty last month), was served "the

broadest subpoena, and one of the most unsupported subpoenas, that has ever been served on an American newsman." Even the New Jersey attorney general, he said, called it "all-inclusive," and the subpoena demanded all notes, photographs and other materials in his possession that pertained to Jascalevich.

As if just demanding a reporter's notes doesn't make the blood run cold of First Amendment lovers everywhere, the subpoena, notes Farber, made no distinction between information garnered from confidential sources and otherwise.

The *Times* asked for a hearing on whether the notes were crucial to the defense, which was denied. Farber maintains that he had nothing that would have established guilt or innocence.

New Jersey has a shield law that, if applied, would have protected Farber and his sources. But the courts held the law was superseded by the defendant's Sixth Amendment guarantees of due process.

Farber counters that he was not only denied *his* Sixth Amendment rights (no hearing), but his First Amendment free press rights and his Fourth Amendment protections against unreasonable search and seizure.

Farber refused to turn over the information, was slapped with contempt of court and thrown in jail. The *Times*, meanwhile, had to pay \$100,000 in an initial fine, and \$5,000 for every day that passed in the trial without Farber turning over the information.

Farber was released soon after the trial ended, and an appeal of the contempt citation is pending before the Supreme Court.

Many observers think the appeal is, for the entire American press, nearly an all-or-nothing-at-all proposition. If the court rules in Farber's favor, an essential component of a free and effective press

will have been maintained. But if the Burger Court, noted for its anti-press rulings, upholds the contempt citation, defense attorneys across the country will use it as a precedent to subpoena information from newsmen whether or not they think it will help establish their client's guilt or innocence.

Reporter-lawyer Jack Landau, chairman of the vanguard Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press that numbers luminaries from Walter Cronkite to Nat Hentoff on its steering committee, told the *Circle* that attorneys can use the tactic to maneuver for a mistrial, delay proceedings, and muddle the issues.

"If I was a defense attorney I would feel obligated to my client to do it," said Landau. "I think they (defense attorneys) would be crazy if they didn't (take advantage of the Farber precedent)."

Scott Aiken of the Cincinnati Enquirer, chairman of the Society of Professional Journalists Freedom of Information Committee fears the Supreme Court is likely to rule against Farber and that will further encourage defense attorneys to use the all-inclusive subpoena. He said he doesn't blame the *Times* for taking their case to the high court, but, "My personal judgement is we're going to get more bad law and the situation is going to get worse."

Aiken said he is most disturbed by two aspects of the case: for one, Farber, he said was denied due process in not getting a hearing on the relevance of his information to the trial before he was cited for contempt and thrown in jail: for another, "is the breach of the shield law." The decision, he said, jeopardizes the shield laws in all 26 states that have them.

Said Dave Lieberth, another lawyer and outspoken free press proponent, "I don't think we will win very many cases (like Farber's) and I think we, the press, may be less willing to give confidences."

That is what disturbs many press members, including Farber: the press' effectiveness as a watchdog on government relies upon the willingness of confidential sources to come forward, somewhat secure that they will not be found out by more powerful but less scrupulous officials. If sources think

reporters will be pressured by courts to reveal their sources, it is feared, those sources will be reluctant to come forward.

"If reporters cannot gather information at times in confidence," said Farber, "then the flow of information—valuable information—to the public is going to be diminished considerably."

"There are a lot of Americans who think what we want is some sort of *special* privilege. Not so, he said, but, "If reporters have a *constitutional* privilege . . . it is because they represent the public's interest."

Free press, he said, "has only one justification and that justification is to serve the American public."

Farber professed a longstanding respect for the law that saw him travelling from his Baltimore home to the Supreme Court building in Washington D.C. as a high school student just to read the books there.

"I am not unmindful of the defendant's rights, but I can not shuck off entirely, on unreasonable demands, my professional duties," he said.

"If the Supreme Court decides that there is no special reporter-source relationship, then we're not going to be able to do our job."

Farber cited a *Sacramento Bee* editorial as a harbinger of the press' future if the Jascavich precedent stands. The editorial explained why the *Bee*, a respected Northern California newspaper, had decided not to run a story for fear that to run the story would lead either to the violation of the source's confidence or the jailing of the story's writer, like Farber had been.

"That's the inevitable consequence of the situation that exists today," said Farber.

He said the situation poses big problems for smaller papers which can't afford the legal fees to protect their rights and for reporters unsure of how far their paper will go to defend them.

Farber said that, for now at least, his notoriety has hindered his newsgathering ability. While in a recent confidential conversation with a source on the street, he was recognized and pointed out by passers-by.

Farber's credibility was questioned during the trial with the revelation of a contract for a book on the case. He said freedom of the press can be exercised as readily in a book as in a newspaper and gave the court a copy of the manuscript. Warner Brothers wanted the movie rights, but Farber nixed the deal when he heard their terms. They wanted his notes.



COURTESY THE BERGEN EVENING RECORD

Special Circle Travel Section

The Kingdom of Grau

by J.P. Kaetz

Note: Due to an extraordinary wind-fall over the summer [a fortuitous job delivering little slips of paper for a man named Big Jocko], author Kaetz was able to afford a trip to the fabled kingdom of Grau, the world's last true autocratic monarchy. This article concerning the country was rejected, unfortunately, by the National Geographic [accompanied by a threatening letter]. Thus, he has sent it to the Circle in the hope that there will be someone who will go to Grau and get taken as badly . . . that is, be as suprised as was he.

A FEW PERTINENT FACTS

The kingdom of Grau is located, according to *Grundley's World Almanac*, ". . . just north of Hell, but not by much." Populated mainly by senile, confused, imported Corsican goatherds and masses of foul-smelling, peg-legged elves (exiled from many countries), Grau is often referred to as "the cold sore on the lip of Europe." Its national animal is the bloodworm, its national plant poison ivy, and the title and main chorus of the national anthem is, "Let me die quickly, O Lord, that I may leave this cesspool of a country." Its chief export products are very short dinner tables manufactured by the large peg-legged elf sector, these tables being passed off as authentic Japanese ceremonial altars to some of the less intelligent tribes of central Africa. The bathwater of the goatherds, collected in huge vats during the annual "Goatherd Bath Day," is considered to be a potentially rich source of petroleum. The populace survives mainly on the national dish, brüñlahka, a sticky concoction of various fruits, cow secretions and dirt.

The King of Grau, Theobald the

Toad-like, is of the ruling House of Bierbellie, the only family ignorant enough to take the job. His Queen is Swollena the Piggish; his immediate heir is Prince Lee the Incrementally Spastic. Here is a brief anecdote about the King, taken from Bernheim Snitzdorf's *Kings and Things*.

"It happened that at the great feast of the High Holy Days (in Grau, alternate Tuesdays and every third Saturday) two women were brought before the King, along with a small child. Each woman claimed that the child was hers. The King decided to emulate wise King Solomon. Ordering his sword to be brought forward, the King chopped the child neatly in two and tried to present each woman with half (he read the Bible; he did not understand it). The women refused to accept. The child was served later with the venison stew, and was quite delicious. This child sacrifice is now a weekly custom."

Grau was founded in 1536 B.C. by a Germanic tribe which was fleeing from an invading mass of interior decorators. They were forced to settle in the desolate area which was to become Grau when they discovered that there was no more instant soup. The leader of the wandering band, Gredlen of Pit, was crowned as the first king and renamed himself King Pit of Gredlen. He took as his wife a large goat, thus initiating the long fall down the evolutionary scale which eventually resulted in King Theobald. The name Grau, literally meaning "grey," was given to the country for obvious reasons.

Since its founding, Grau has existed rather inconspicuously. It emerged only briefly in world affairs, that being in 1949 when King Gralpin the Well-fed, convinced that Germany would win the war, sent his crack militia (consisting of four hand-picked hemophiliacs—the Red Brigade—and a pack of attack rats) to aid Hitler. The militia became

somewhat confused once outside the confines of the tiny kingdom and spent the remainder of the war in a cave, breeding and eating the rats.

THINGS TO SEE AND DO IN GRAU

Although a week in Grau is considered by most to be comparable to a year in a small tin box in a Brazilian swamp, there are some things to be seen which make a short visit quite . . . interesting. Here are just a few of the sights and activities which one should put on one's "must" list, right after "Buy home circumcision kit."

National Battlefield—Due to the lack of level, uncluttered space in Grau's 2.7 square mile area, all battles have been fought on a plot of ground the size of an average American living room, located in east Grau. Commemorated on small plastic monuments are such encounters as The Civil War of 1417, in which King Perspiro the Smelly so offended the forces of Prince Erd the Slow-witted by dropping his pants and crossing his eyes repeatedly that they threw down their arms and fled, retching violently.

Museum of Natural History—Famed for its collection of petrified dinosaur excrement (the area seems to have been something of a great rest station in ancient times), the museum features such native Grauian flora and fauna as the Blood-spitting Honeysuckle and the One-winged Skipping Mockingbird.

Festival of the Northern Geese—In the Fall, as the geese migrate to a warmer climate, their flight path takes them directly over Grau. On this day (September 6, or sometimes later), the people dress in colorful costumes designed to look like piles of straw and gather on Mt. Dilnap (16.3 feet above sea level). Here they wait patiently until the geese appear. The High Priest of the state church (The Covenantal Gathering

of More or Less Disinterested Persons, Inc.) recites a poem written by Grau's most noted author, Willard Simpsore, which goes something like this:

"Come down to me;
Come down to me;
Come down to me;
Come down to me."

The people then leap up and down, each person hoping to be the one to catch any diseased goose which might be unfortunate enough to give up the ghost over the area. The geese simply emulate the ancient dinosaurs, then fly serenely on.

The Royal Castle—Cited by Frank Lloyd Wright as the "most tasteless piece of architecture ever erected," the green and pink adobe structure, six rooms in all (not counting the outhouse), is one of Grau's liveliest tourist spots. This is because the King himself conducts the tours, which are his sole source of

income. The highlight of the tour is when the King pulls open the shower curtain to reveal an obese and cursing Queen.

The Dezemberfest— Patterned after Germany's Oktoberfest, this month-long celebration culminates an otherwise dull and dreary year in Grau. The final week of December is given over to parades (a difficult undertaking, considering that the area is by this time under an average of seventeen feet of snow) and parties. The largest party is that given by the King, at which the special festival punch, Grölchencrudd (beer, nuts and cornmeal), is served in immense quantities. Everyone gets roaring drunk, rushes out into the snow, and shouts, "Please, somebody get me out of here!" Many faint and freeze to death. Their bodies remain in the snow until around February, when they begin to disappear

one by one (the winter is long and food short in Grau).

SOME HELPFUL HINTS

Here are just a few suggestions to render your stay in Grau a bit more comfortable.

—There is no serious language barrier to overcome, since the people of Grau communicate for the most part through grunts, gestures and frequent profanity.

—Water may be a problem, since no river runs through the country and the pump system for bringing water from neighboring areas consists of two trained bears jumping up and down on an old bellows attached to a hose pipe.

—Should you be unfortunate enough to be forced to lodge in a private

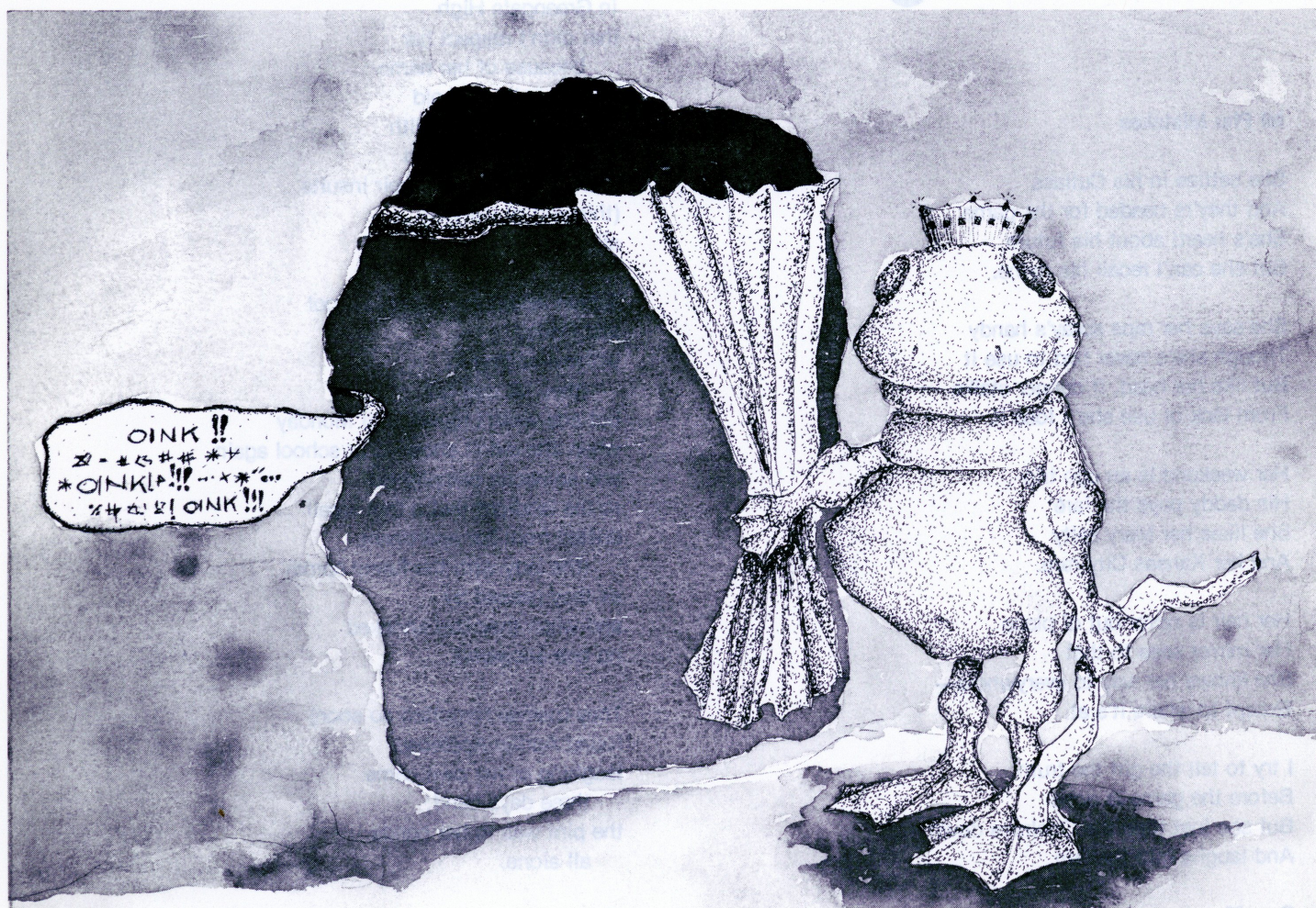


illustration by Brian Thompson

residence in Grau (the one motel burned years ago), remember this simple custom; when coming into the house, spit over your left shoulder, then on the floor, then on your host. The anointing of others with your own bodily juices is considered a polite form of greeting. It would be even better if you could throw up on your host each time you enter; this tends to be hard on the stomach.

—Do not become upset at the strange behavior of the inhabitants. It is not uncommon for a husband and wife to exchange gunfire in the town square, using their children as shields.

May your stay in Grau be pleasant and brief, or as the old Grauian proverb says, "May the sun set on the horizon before you know that I have stolen your wallet and sold your wife into white slavery."



Mi Phu Mistakes

She settles in his Cutlass
And they're headed for the game
She's heard about his future
But she can't recall his name.

She says her rape spray's handy
Though she's never had to use it
But like her head, if danger stalks
From lack of use she'll lose it.

Her weekend is an ego trip
His daddy pays the fare
She likes her Mary salty
And her Kansas City rare.

Her hair is never out of place
Her mirror sees to that
She knows her way to everywhere—
Except to where it's at.

I try to tell the girl the truth
Before the game is done
But she just flips the Coolrays down
And laughs into the sun.

Sam Morgan

Adrian Applebee

Adrian Applebee liked her name
but no one else did
she would cry at night
because of that
and drown her sorrows
with the pint she kept on the top shelf
(it was never, "a" pint, to her)
while watching reruns
she couldn't stand
until she finally would succumb
to exhaustion
and fall asleep with her clothes on
only to wake up in the
uncomfortable darkness
with the television
making the damndest beeping noise
all alone.

Adrian Applebee taught children
in Greengate High
that didn't respect her
because of her name
because she was old
because they were filth
but Adrian liked them
and smiled through their insults
(thinking of the pint)
all alone.

Adrian Applebee missed school
last Friday
without calling in
(they let that go)
but she wasn't found until Monday
when she didn't show up at school again
and someone complained
to the landlord that a foul smell
drifted from her apartment
(the lady with the funny name)
as they passed by
and when they had knocked
no one answered.

They (names forgotten so soon)
found Adrian Applebee
laughing at her own name
three days dead;
the pint was in her hands
all alone.

Mike Donahue

Shorts



Fiction by Mala Paulk

The gang that got off every afternoon on the corner of Killebrew and Ozark Streets had dwindled considerably since Roy Lisenby had graduated and the Carmichael girl and E.B. Stinson had to marry. Now there was only the four of us—Rita Warner, the Pruett sisters, Twila and Ginerva, and me—a quartet that according to some sentimental souls should have been bound by a certain uncontestable loyalty that comes through braving the perils and pains of youth together. This was hardly the case with our foursome, for although together we had endured the school bus stench of stale peanut butter sandwiches, mildewed gym shoes, and musty, plastic seat covers since chocolate milk days, we nevertheless chose to remain safely in separate social realms. This, of course, was broken by a ten minute truce each weekday when we made our four-block pilgrimage homeward.

Generally, the afternoon stroll from the bus stop was not the high point of any of our social calendars, but we made the best of a mediocre situation, often stopping for sundaes or window shopping as we proceeded through the one block business district that comprised our downtown. This succeeded a kind of ceremonial slinging of notebooks, *Norton Anthologies* and Geometry protractors around a prim-looking

pink flamingo statue that sat before the Ledford's driveway like Cerebus guarding the entrance to Hell.

That's when Rita Warner would begin spouting trivia about cheerleading stunts and new blemish cover-up and her exercises. We all held Rita a certain undefinable respect, for she was a member of the elite rah-rah crowd who traded a bit of their individualism for a chance to be popular. She somehow captured titles like homecoming attendant, class favorite and Student Council secretary without anyone recalling her name upon the ballot, much less voting for her. Her sister, Barbara Jean, worked in the Fine China division of Fair Brothers Department Store in Montgomery, which in Rita's mind, made her the foremost fashion and personal charm expert in all of Killcare. She was pretty in a made-up sort of way with a contagious laugh and a set of blue eyes that could be provocative, innocent, cutting and kind all at once. When we were second-graders, she asked how I liked her Barbie wrist watch. It had a pink band and Barbie's snobbish likeness on the face, her blonde ponytail separated into two flipping curls serving as watch hands.

"Well, even if I was lucky enough to get a Barbie watch, then I sure wouldn't be snotty enough to make other boys and girls feel bad 'cause their mommies and daddies couldn't get them one!"

That was the last time Rita Warner sought my frank opinion about anything.

illustration by Christopher Payne

For a general twinkle of approval in regard to any word or deed, Rita, like the rest of our school, turned to the plain, pale faces of the Pruett sisters. People in Killcare had always labeled the pair "the prude Pruett," but when an encouraging word or affirmative answer was needed they were the first to be considered. They were simply too retiring, too spiritless to be controversial. There were six Pruett altogether—three girls, a boy, and a father and mother, an incredible breed to try and figure. Sober, small-framed, mousey-haired, they were always attending Prayer Meetings, always visiting the sick and afflicted, always throwing themselves upon the altar at our church's spring revival. People in town debated whether it was because they had some scarlet sin blotting their past or they were just inately pure.

On this particular afternoon, we freed our imprisoned feet from bobby socks and scuffed saddle shoes to expose tender soles, soles held safe all winter long, like moths in cocoons, to the warming cement of the sidewalk. That is, everyone except Rita Warner—she was busy lecturing.

"'Ya gotta' work hard to get those seams straight, ya' know.'" She licked her hands and ran them unsensuously up her nylons.

"'Now do you swear to God they're straight?'" Rita almost lost her balance in an effort to check our honesty.

"'Ya'll really ought to come shopping in Montgomery with me. Barbara Jean says that stores down here are absolutely archaic.'"

Archaic had been on my vocabulary list in Miss Jenson's lit. class too, but I certainly had no intentions of flaunting my knowledge the way Rita always did.

Past McKnight's Mercantile and Faye's Electrolysis Clinic and Bob's Feed Outlet we sluggishly strolled, listening to Rita anguish over the problems in dating two boys on the same football team, until finally pausing before the display window of Minshew's Fabrics. Already the summer fabrics of pastel dotted swisses, crisp cottons and slinky jerseys had arrived, filled the dusty window with the light airiness that the forest greens, deep maroons, and chocolate browns of winter had been unable to do. A new McCall's cardboard display poster was propped against a bolt of lilac muslin. A skinny-legged model with a Colgate white grin was posed confidently on a sailing dock in something that looked like my brother Bruce's boxer underwear.

"THIS SEASON'S SENSATION—SPECTACULAR SHORTS!"

Rita read the logo on the advertisement aloud to our group, as if we were handicapped old ladies who had forgotten their bifocals.

"My God, I've got to have some!" shouted Rita.

I hated to admit it, but for probably the first time since second grade, I agreed with Rita Warner on something; they were magnificent. I thought about choir practices and dinners-on-the-ground, and those magazines for "youth in a changing world"; my life was frustratingly dull. Shorts could just make the difference in the monotony that was my existence. I had always held a great fondness for people who chose to indulge on the wilder, less inhibited side of life, although in all of my seventeen years, I had consumed alcohol

once, parked twice, and spoken the Lord's name in vain thrice. I was ready to move into the ranks of the capricious.

Directing her comments to the Pruett sisters, she began her quiz.

"Well girls, don't you think they're absolutely divine? They'll drive the boys absolutely wild!"

For once, absent was the customary nod of affirmation from the Pruett sisters. A certain color had risen to the waxen cheeks and a hungry, or maybe it was a pleading, look flowed from their eyes. They mumbled something about hurrying home and left Rita and I alone before Minshew's to rave at the new fashion's immodesty.

"I want a pair of blue seersucker shorts with a big silver button in the middle and why don't you, Oma," she flicked a long, painted nail my way, "get some red ones with a gold button."

To agree with Rita Warner twice in the same day seemed almost too incredible, but red was my favorite color and thoughts of parading the limits of Killcare in a pair of shorts evoked visions of transforming me, plain ol' Oma Cherry, into a popular girl.

We purchased the goods in an energetic frenzy and jogged the remaining journey to my house.

I had been the best seamstress in our home ec class, so naturally I was thrust into the Betsy Ross role in this venture. The more the machine needle hopped up and down, the more I felt I was employed in an almost divine mission. The white outer stitching against the crisp, vibrant colors and the metallic buttons which seemed to reflect the world like a mirror—they were splendid.

"Mama always said you ought to leave something to the boy's imaginations," preached Rita as she hemmed her shorts.

She slipped her shapely, muscular, cheerleader legs into the shorts and stood before my closet mirror pinching pudgy areas on her body, turning around and around as she gazed.

"I am so fat!" she screamed.

She sat breathing hard, waiting for my reassurance that indeed she had a very fine figure, and when it never came, she quieted.

No Cinderella transformation was evident when I changed into my shorts, but vainly I was impressed to see the image staring before me in the mirror. Costumed in my shorts, I felt confident to hasten my step and twitch in daring, new areas. I loved them. I felt appealing in them. I wanted the world to see them.

"Hey, Oma, the Rebels got a game in Hayes Park tonight—why don't we wear our shorts!"

With the bravery of a western pioneer I said 'yes.' I thought I saw a star peaking through the pink sky that evening as Rita and I made our way up the street towards the ball park. There was something within me that felt like humming and screaming and laughing all at once. We both breathed hard, like children awaiting Christmas morning.

"We gotta' walk graceful ya' know . . . one foot in front of the other and hold your stomach in and ya' chest out."

I looked down at my body and felt it a fruitless effort to thrust my chest forward. No one would have probably noticed

anyway. Concentrating on making long, elegant strides as we strolled, I found it hard to be graceful wearing flip-flops and trudging through red clay.

Pausing before the Pruett house, we saw the clan sitting solemnly on the front porch rockers watching us pass with moderate interest.

Mr. Sully Pruett, the father of the household, was the member who aroused the greatest speculation in town. At slumber parties we made up stories about his origins and impersonated his serious, often unmistakably mean countenance. Our relationship consisted of nothing more than an occasional nod upon meeting at the cleaners or post office, but from general knowledge gleaned from hometown gossip rather than actual evidence, I knew he was the strangest of all the Pruett tribe. Stoop-shouldered, graying, Mr. Sully Pruett was prone to preach about the Second Coming at the corner of Ozark and Killebrew Streets. The only real conversation between us, which I could credit to my memory, was two falls ago when he demanded that I stand beside him and play my accordian as he did his Saturday preaching on the anti-Christ. When his demand went unheeded, he threatened me with eternal damnation for my apathy. His penetrating gaze made me feel like the Woman at the Well.

"Twila, Ginerva, how do ya' like em?" Rita grabbed the cuffs of her shorts and curtsied in a prissy way.

Ginerva, the most anemic-looking of the Pruett crowd, stared at our clean-shaven legs and blushed as though she had seen nudity in its most contemptible form. That was to be expected of Ginerva. She still thought dresses that bared the collar bone before four in the afternoon were terribly immodest. She was always screwing her mouth into some odd shape and chewing the skin around it.

While no verbal response on the part of Twila was heard, certain sparks of approval kept leaping from her hazel eyes. I

had long ago decided that if her cheek bones were higher, her nose smaller, and her legs longer, she would have been a beauty. In the mornings lately, between bounces on the scratchy school bus cushions, Twila had begun pinning a little red velvet bow in her hair, in front, right behind her bangs. The bow was obviously a Christmas remnant, dusty, wrinkled, faded. Velvet, according to Rita, was definitely out of season in the spring. Still, we all looked upon this effort by Twila with the same pride that registers with young mothers when their babies initiate their first sentence.

Old Sully Pruett kept rocking harder and faster with that stone face of his. He looked straight into our faces, or maybe a little above our heads, I really couldn't tell, but he made it obvious that his eyes could venture no further than our shoulders.

Suddenly, as if some revelation had been made to him while he rocked, Mr. Sully Pruett leaped from his chair, his voice booming like that of an evangelist.

"Get thee hence from this household, devils!"

The closest thing to an expression of disgust etched itself upon the Pruett girls faces. Twila ducked her head and clenched her fists and ran into the safety of their parlor; almost emotionally, Ginerva followed.

I took off my flip-flops and ran, and though Rita tried momentarily to contain the composure of a true lady, she passed me in our race from the Pruett property.

"Boy, you've really done it this time, Oma Cherry."

She was sitting on my front steps panting and pushing back her cuticles.

"Me, why me?" I wailed between efforts to catch my breath.

"'Cause you were the one that made them."

Then I felt akin to Joan of Arc, or the Christians facing hungry lions. The Warners originated from North Carolina. That made them practically Yankees. Most townspeople



would just assume that Rita knew no better than to wear what she did. But I was different—I was a native Killcarean, bred with an unsung code.

I was sitting on a kitchen stool, watching my mother fry okra the next day, when the call arrived.

"It's for you, dear—Mayor Espee."

Suprisingly, my mother thought the whole controversy was ridiculous. She let me off without the expected morality lecture I was usually served when she found me painting my lids too brightly or unbuttoning my blouse a bit too far.

"Oma, I got somethin' in my office here that might interest you and that little Warner girl. It's a petition brought to me by Sully Pruett trying to prohibit public wearing of shorts.

"Well, what does it say?" I asked meekly.

"IN ACCORDANCE TO THE TEACHINGS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT THE FOLLOWING CHRISTIAN PEOPLE OF KILLCARE MOVE TO BAN THE IMMORAL WEARING OF SHORTS UPON THE STREETS OF OUR BELOVED TOWN, AS THEY ARE AN ABOMINATION IN THE SIGHT OF GOD."

"It's signed here by Mary Alice Balkhom, Quintus and Myra Enfinger, the Clark sisters, Louise Snellgrove and Aubrey and Vermelle McKnight."

I knew I had nothing to really anguish over—Miss Mary Alice Balkhom was an old maid; the Enfingers had never progressed beyond second grade, Joette and Thelma Clark still used an outhouse; crazy Louise Snellgrove ran through the town barefoot and in a gypsy costume; and the McKnights were so decrepit they still required a live-in nurse.

"Now Oma, I've seen that poster at Minshew's and by God, I love 'em. If the girls' got the legs for 'em, then let 'em wear 'em. I thought I just needed to tell 'ya about all this for the record."

Mayor Espee was the most influential man in Killcare County. He had three hardware stores in Geneva, Hartford and Slocomb, the finest Hereford cows in four counties, and a son who played fullback at Auburn.

The next morning, I saw Sully Pruett making his way up our street with a stack of old Chilton County peach crates. He had a new spring to his step, as a man freshly acquainted with his purpose in life, with a certain gleam in his eye that before was absent. On the corner of Killebrew and Ozark Streets, he lined up the peach crates, constructing a rickety podium. On this, Mr. Sully Pruett placed two Bible translations, a stained piece of Gospel sheet music, and a Coke bottle. Then, in the coolness of a morning free from the stifling heat of a spring day, Mr. Pruett began the most boisterous, the most fervent preaching effort I had heard in all of my seventeen years. He raised and lowered his voice tone like the waves of the ocean and twirled his finger dramatically through the air.

For the first time, Sully Pruett was performing before a crowd—six Little Leaguers on bicycles with banana seats, a Korean couple from the Base, two housewives buckling with the weight of dirty wash, and a number of drooling, yellow dogs. The group grew to include Tom Pettit, the postman,

the Sunbeam bread truck driver, and the Ledfords whose red brick house faces the circus; the whole town slowly turned out in a kind of curiosity to witness the ravings of a twentieth-century Puritan. This was Mr. Sully Pruett's finest hour.

Dutifully, Rita Warner and I appeared at the street sermon clad in our shorts. Rita found the controversy so exciting, the glances so thrilling, that her voice rose louder and louder.

"Isn't this absolutely wild, Oma? I mean, isn't this a real zoo?"

I decided that being the center of attention was not all it was cracked up to be. Huge rings of perspiration grew beneath my armpits, giving my solid blouse a patterned appearance.

The two of us sat in the Ledford's yard next to the pink flamingo; we couldn't clearly hear what was being said, but occasionally Mr. Pruett would point to us and the crowd would turn and stare. Rita loved that part; she would frantically wave her arms and scream, "Wave Oma, wave!"

Admittedly, the whole affair had given me a new vivaciousness, a new vampish smile.

Speaker and spectators were beginning to suffocate in the spring mugginess—unbuttoning collars, loosening shoe laces for expanding feet, wiping upper lips clean of shiny perspiration beads. Rita stood up to demonstrate some new leg exercise for me, when she saw an extraordinary pair riding a Schwin bicycle up the street.

"My God, Oma, who in the world is that?"

I squinted to determine the mystery riders and, as they approached, I broke out in a gasp.

"It's the Pruett sisters!"

My eyes were so wide they watered in the breeze.

The bicycle was rusty, a metallic red, about twelve Christmases old, with fluorescent dots on the handle bars and a wire basket in front. The Pruett sisters were decked in what appeared to be cut-off pairs of their brother Harrison's old work pants; they were shorts just the same. Twila, her little red bow stuck boldly in her hair, peddled the vehicle furiously, her eyes firmly fixed upon Rita and I and the pink flamingo. Ginerva, grasping her sister's cotton blouse for dear life, wildly biting the skin around her mouth, looked straight into the small of Twila's back. Their legs looked kind of bleached and shapely in a thin way. They rode madly to the corner by the street congregation and turned left.

Sully Pruett had halted his ravings in mid-sentence when he saw the pair peddling towards him. Somehow he looked even more stoop-shouldered and sober than before—I almost felt sorry for him. He dragged his peach crates back home. Shorts were in Killcare to stay.

That was my big, shining hour of popularity, my one great moment of friendship with Rita Warner. Rita Warner still bragged and the Pruett sisters still agreed. But while the ten minute hike from the bus stop homeward still held all of its former doldrum, there was a certain unmentioned but still uncontestable bond of loyalty among the gang that got off each day at the corner of Killebrew and Ozark.

The Auction

When Hope Lynn tells you he's got everything but the kitchen sink, he ain't kidding.

Lynn, who has been a professional auctioneer for 13 years, sells anything from false teeth and bottles of buttons to expensive antique furniture at his quaint barn near Tallassee.

People from neighboring states attend his auction both to buy and be entertained. While his merchandise draws crowds, many people tell you they come simply to enjoy a night of good family fun.

Lynn has a way of keeping the crowd laughing. His colorful jokes, mingled with his fast-paced auctioneering, please the crowd which responds heartily in chuckles and bids.

The audience is comprised of folks from all walks of life. Country bumpkins, college students, children, retired couples and even faculty members all delight in the casual, old-timey auction.

Peanuts, ice cold cola, pimento sandwiches and tobacco all eventually end up on the cement floor of the selling barn. People eat and chew, swallow and spit, bid and buy.



by Wanda Kenton



"You might say my auctions are a lot like country church," Lynn said. "People get to know each other real well and feel free to have a good time."

Lynn's sing-songy auctioneer's voice presides over the wooden, people-packed barn. He sits comfortably in a high-back chair and addresses his friends and fans in a most unique manner.

Merchandise sells for as low as \$1 and as high as \$1,000. While Lynn has a large assortment of items, he said his "junk" and his "collector items" sell equally well.

"What's junk to one person might be extremely valuable to another," he explained.

"'Bout all I ever really get out of my auctions is enjoyment," he chuckled. "I do a good bit of selling, so I honestly

don't mind if people come out to watch."

"People genuinely seem to have a great time and they get some good things for their money too," the 62-year-old auctioneer said.

Many of Lynn's customers are regulars, like A.B. Dennis of Carrville, has been a steady customer for ten years."

"Me and my wife Louise came to Hope's first auction here," he said. "Since the first one, we've only missed one that he's had around here." Dennis said the auctions gave he and his wife something to do and that it was "a real good place to buy stuff at low prices."

Another regular customer, Barbara Redden, said she and her husband have been attending Lynn's auctions for seven years.

"You can find a lot of really good buys out here," said Redden, who drives in from Columbus, Georgia. "Hope is one of the few honest auctioneers and he won't bid on his own merchandise."

Redden has brought many friends with her to Lynn's auctions and says many of them are surprised at the operation.

"This is the first one I've ever attended," said Donna Grubb. "The only way I can sum it up is to say it was pure fascination—I've never seen anything like it before."

While many people like Grubb are astonished, others like Tommy Smith of Notasulga are refreshed.

"Lots of people have money to blow on dates," the 17-year-old said. "I don't have much extra cash so I sometimes bring my dates out here and then to Hotel Talisi for dinner—these auctions are fun and you always feel good when you leave."

Lynn learned the tricks of the trade in 1967 when he attended an auctioneer school in Mason City, Iowa. He was taught the fundamentals of voice projection, various methods of selling, and also studied several books concerning the subject.

As part of his course study, he had to preside at an auction in Iowa where people from all over the country had gathered.

"After that first real attempt, I enjoyed it so much that I knew I had to do it," he said.



Auctioneering came easy for Lynn, since his father had dealt some with antiques when he was growing up. At the age of twelve, he attended his first auction where he was able to buy some merchandise. Since that time almost 50 years ago, he has continued to buy and sell for an occupation.

As former president of the Alabama State Auctioneers Association, Lynn has met most state dealers. Many of them bring their goods to his auctions for sale. They pay him 15 percent for every item sold. He attends their auctions occasionally and does likewise.

"I've put close to 10,000 miles on my car every year from my travels," he said. "Lots of times I sell estates and I do free auctions for fund raising sometimes,

military groups, high schools, churches, clubs, and a variety of organizations throughout the state.

"I usually do 13 free auctions during the year for worthy causes," he said. "It's nice to know I can be of service to others."

While the majority of people who attend Lynn's auctions appreciate the amusing auctioneer, others take advantage of his low prices.

"Every once in a while someone will try to steal from me," said Lynn. "It's a shame that some people have to do that, especially when my prices are so low."

In order to protect himself from another form of theft, Lynn is very careful in his dealings with sellers of items. He requires the potential seller to sign for his goods. They must fill out



forms which include names, addresses and a description of the merchandise they are selling.

"When things are stolen, word spreads throughout the state to auctioneers," said Lynn. "If somebody refuses to sign for something they are selling, then I simply won't buy."

"There are really only a few people you have to watch out for," he said.

One of the things that intrigues the popular auctioneer most about his business are the people who attend, and they keep him from a retirement he could easily afford.

"We get millionaires and some people who can't afford to buy a thing," he said. "People make my auctions what they are—enjoyable."

As he put it, "I'm not gonna call it quits 'til I die or can't pucker my lips anymore."

Lynn's auctions, which are usually announced in the Opelika and Auburn papers, are held on Highway 14 East a few miles outside of Tallassee. While there are no regularly scheduled auctions, they are held usually on Friday nights beginning somewhere near 7 p.m.





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Geese and Swans

by Mark Willis

Sunday afternoons in summer are usually quiet at the newspaper. Every damn visitor is out on the beach sipping warm beer and roasting his flabby body under the Florida sun. And as long as they don't let a kid drown, or wreck their cars driving over to the island, well, everything's quiet.

And if everything's quiet, all I have to do is write up obituaries, or maybe work on a feature story that was due yesterday, or listen to one or two of the town's lunatics who call in tips. After a while you only half-listen to the fantastic stories.

Nettles came into the newsroom just as I hung up on one regular tipster, an ancient man with a decrepit voice who always called from the same bar. I said to Nettles:

"Hey ace. You missed a damn good tip. Just right for sports."

"Unlucky me," said Nettles.

"It was a fish story. This old guy says he saw a killer whale swimming just off the breakers. It was solid white, too."

"White? And suppose there was a man with a wooden leg riding that white whale."

"See the movie?" I asked, noting his allusion.

"No, I read the book."

"I'm impressed. Nevertheless, I think you should jump right on top of this story."

"I think," Nettles said, "I'll get me some coffee." He disappeared into the backshop.

Nettles was someone you would've liked to admire—if he would've let you. When he had first been hired by the newspaper, Nettles covered the city beat. Wrote some good pieces, too. Only think . . . whenever Nettles attended a city meeting you never knew if he would report on the business before the council, or ask some bricklayer in the back what he thought of the mayor. You just never knew what he would write.

Whatever he wrote, though, was quality stuff. He seemed to be able to see through the masks of most people. Once, after I had just started at the paper, Nettles told me: "Just listen closely to people. Most of them will betray themselves."

I suppose that's why the management had kept him around after he had refused to hatchet the mayor. Nettles never let on as to whether or not he was unhappy in sports, but his writing didn't suffer. You still never knew what he would write.

Nettles came back into the newsroom gripping a ceramic mug filled with coffee, the steam floating up. He stopped beside my desk, raising the mug to his lips so as to cool the coffee with a breath. His eyes disappeared as the vapor condensed on his eyeglasses.

Setting down his coffee mug, he removed his glasses to wipe clear the moisture. The circles beneath his eyes seemed broader and darker, and with his greying hair and knitted brow, Nettles seemed decades older than I knew he was. I asked:

"Sleeping in your clothes these days, ace?" He wore the same suit he had worn yesterday.

"My, My! Haven't we a sharp tongue on this our Lord's day? But if I must be quoted, then yes, yes! I slept in my clothes. And it's your fault!" His voice rose in dramatic fervor.

"My fault? How in the hell is it my fault?"

"Weren't you going to meet me at the Boarshead for drinks last night?"

"Yeah, but I got hung up."

"I rest my case, your honor. It wasn't my fault. I'm not responsible."

I was quiet for a moment. Nettles smiled smugly, eager to continue. So I said:

"Well, suh. Y'all's goin' has to 'splain to this po' dumb suthner why y'all slept in y'all's clothes las' night, and why's it his'n fault."

"You were going to meet me at the Boarshead last night, right?"

"Right."

"Well, because you didn't show up to save me, I fell into the clutches of an evil man."

"Heaven forbid!"

"Yes. That evil man, that son-of-a-bitching lawyer from At-lanta, stole nearly all of my last week's paycheck."

"How?"

"Backgammon."

"Nettles, you know you're a lousy backgammon player. You're even worse when you're drunk. So why's it my fault?"

"You didn't save me from myself."

Exasperated, I shook my head, and said:

"Nettles, you still haven't explained to me why it's my fault you slept in your clothes last night."

"Oh. Well, when you didn't show up and I lost last week's paycheck, I felt pretty low. I needed some consolation. So I drove over to Gabe's Horn to catch the three a.m. show."

"And Jo-Jo?"

"I knew they didn't award you that degree just because your daddy has money. Yeah, Jo-Jo was working. She came strutting out, saw me and motioned for me to pluck her feather."

"I'll bet."

"No, no. You don't understand our relationship. Purely spiritual. You should hear her read Donne. Why just last

illustration by Carol Etheridge

night after we had . . . ”

“Excuse me.” At the sound of the soft voice, both Nettles and I started. We hadn’t heard or seen anyone come in.

“Excuse me,” the voice repeated. “May I speak with a reporter, please?”

A newspaper naturally attracts unusual characters, attracts them like moths to a flame. They know that if they come into the newsroom, a reporter will have to listen to them, no matter how wild the story. So they all come: the politicians and land swindlers, the strippers and axe-murderers. This new visitor impressed me as being one of the axe-murderers.

Perhaps it was his eyes, or maybe his shaggy beard and hair. No, it was his eyes. Their intenseness blinded like the highbeams of an approaching car on a black road. With his walking staff and pack he looked as if he were on a pilgrimage. He said:

“Are either of you reporters? I’ve come to spread the Word. Can you help me?”

“What ‘word’? I asked.

Are you a reporter?”

“I wouldn’t be spending my afternoons in here if I weren’t. What ‘word’?”

“Are you a reporter?”

“Yeah, he . . . we both are,” Nettles said, pointing to me and then himself. “What can we do for you?”

“I’ve . . . seen things. I’ve had visions. You can help me spread the Word by publishing a story.”

“What ‘word’?” I asked.

“The day of His Coming is near. We must prepare ourselves for Him.”

“Oh, Jesus!” I said. “Show me your hands!”

“That’s enough, Thompson,” said Nettles. “I’ll talk with you, friend. Come over here, and sit down.”

Few prophets had dared invade the sanctity of the newsroom, so I thought I’d better make an example of this one. I said:

“Pray tell, what is God?”

“God is Good.”

“And can you prove that to me?”

“I believe in the Goodness of God. I have faith.”

“Faith? Oh, yes. And did man create god? Did some ancient lawgiver think that his subjects might be cowed by the threats of a god? Do you . . . ”

“Shut up, Thompson!” It was Nettles. His face was red. “Go get yourself some coffee. Come over here, friend. Don’t mind that asshole. He hasn’t been right since college.”

The prophet meekly obeyed Nettles, while I went into the backshop to get some coffee. I swung the door back so it slammed hard. I had heard the prophet’s words too many times before, and didn’t care to hear them again. Especially not on a Sunday afternoon.

Sundays had a way of deceiving you, though. As a child, I liked the morning service for the singing and chanting touching the ear, the candles flickering warmly, and the vestments swishing crisply, moved by a measured step. I felt then the spirit permeating me with the dying organ chords. But worshippers in the morning, singing and chanting, in the afternoon were stabbing each other. Always God, God, oh

God! She had implored me; she had said, “dear brother repent and be forgiven,” and all the while dark in the vestry moaning god, god, oh god! No angels, no demons. Humans among wood and wine, brick and glass. And no lightning, no sudden fury. I had run.

And today, this Sunday, had deceived me by letting some sanctimonious bastard invade the worldliness of the newsroom. He had no right to shake his words at my creation. He had no right.

I drained the coffee mug down to the dregs, and returned to the newsroom. Nettles sat at his desk.

“Where’s Elijah?” I asked. “Did you find out when the world will end?” Nettles whirled toward me.

“Damn you, can’t you be civil? Can’t you respect another’s beliefs?” His tone was too harsh. I went to my desk.

After about an hour, Nettles came over and sat down. I asked:

“What’s his story?”

“He said an angel spoke to him in a dream, and told him to give up everything he had, and witness. And he did.”

“Was he sincere? Do you believe him?”

“He believed himself. That’s all that matters. Did you see his eyes? They were the clearest blue, so untroubled.”

“Are you going to write a story?”

“After seeing your reaction? No, there are too many people already who feel threatened by religion without me writing a piece on a prophet.”

“Threatened?”

“Yeah. People like you who see religion as a threat to their . . . I don’t know . . . their individuality, maybe.”

“Individuality has nothing to do with it. It’s a matter of truth.”

“Truth? Oh . . . nobody can prove to me the truth of either yours or that young man’s beliefs. But it doesn’t matter. Not if you believe in something that provides some order.”

“And what do you believe?”

“Me? What day is it? I went into newspapers so I wouldn’t be asked those questions anymore. I couldn’t answer any of them. Oh, I tried, believe me. But I couldn’t answer them. Now I just ask questions. It’s much simpler.”

“But how do you live?”

“Oh, I just enjoy life the few moments I can, and suffer away the rest of the hours.”

“How heroic.”

“Listen. Anyone today who lives and doesn’t whine can be a hero.”

I thought a moment. Nettles didn’t know the whole story, but I said nothing. (In the backshop someone had mixed the wrong proportions of chemicals together, and an acrid odor floated into the newsroom.)

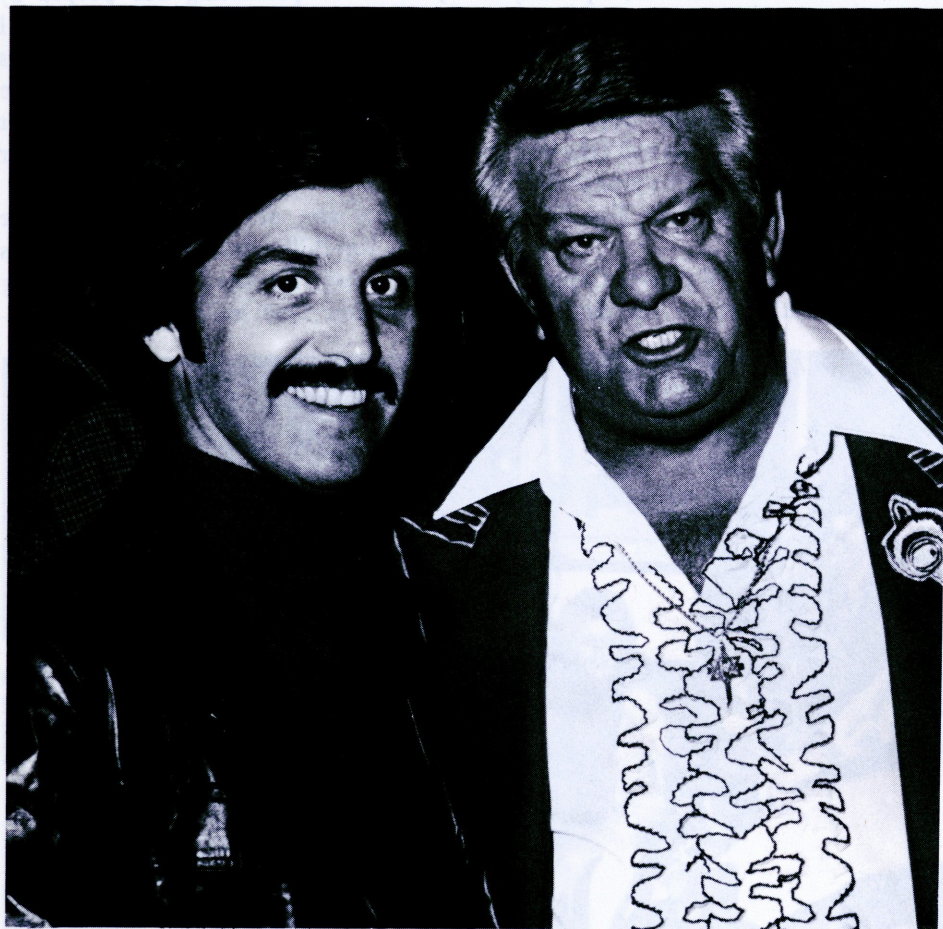
“Hell,” Nettles finally said, “let’s forget all this nonsense. Why don’t you and I go drinking after work tonight? You owe me drinks. It’s your fault, you know, that I slept in my clothes. Besides, Jo-Jo’s working, and she might let you pluck her feather.”

“Not tonight, Nettles. Some other night, maybe.”



Top Billing

A southern PR firm has become one of the hottest around with luminaries like Billy Carter and Cornelia Wallace among its clientele. An Auburn man is right there at the top.



Ty Coppinger, '69 Auburn alum, left, talks with Jerry Clower, country comedian.

by Betsy Butgereit

We're told the music business is a hectic and fast-paced one, and according to Ty Coppinger, a 1969 Auburn alumni, the country music business is no exception.

Coppinger is an executive with Top Billing, Inc., the Nashville firm that handles, among other clients, First

Brother Billy Carter. Owned by Super-agent Tandy Rice, the company has skyrocketed into national attention.

Rice himself has been the object of articles in *People* magazine and *Newsweek* and the subject of a "20/20" segment. In October the *Saturday Evening Post* had also expressed interest in doing a story on Rice and his stellar corps of country and western stars.

"And not one phone call was made to solicit any of that," Coppinger said. "It's just when one thing gets going in this business, it just snowballs. In our case, I think most of it's due to having Billy Carter."

Other Top Billing clients include Jerry Clower, a well-known country and western comic; Tom T. Hall, the low-keyed minstrel from Nashville; Jim Ed Brown and Helen Cornelius of "Nashville on the Road;" piano-playing Floyd Cramer; lately signed by Jimmy Dean; Wendy Holcombe, a blonde banjo-picking bombshell from Alabaster, Ala.; and even Alabama's ex-first lady Cornelia Wallace. And the list continues.

Top Billing has taken a lot of flak from critics about the handling of Billy Carter's "career," especially since Brother Billy will probably make \$500,000 this year, and Brother Jimmy's haul will only be \$200,000. Rice answered such criticisms in the *People* interview. He said, "If you don't like the act he's selling—Billy Beer or T-shirts—you have a sure-fire way of dealing with it: Exercise your option of not buying. Walk away. But don't criticize him for being caught up in the same system we are all caught up in."

But life with Jimmy's brother Billy has its light moments. Coppinger now wears a pair of boots he won from Billy Carter as payment of a bet on this year's Auburn-Tennessee game. Since signing up with Top Billing, Coppinger said, Billy has become good friends with Johnny Majors, head football coach at the University of Tennessee.

photos by Don Putnam

"Sometimes on the road Billy sleeps in a Tennessee T-shirt just to aggravate me," Coppinger said in Nashville before the Auburn-Vanderbilt rout, "but I had the last laugh. We bet on the outcome of the Auburn-Tennessee game. The Monday after the game, I hadn't been in the office 10 minutes when I get a long distance call from Billy. He was in Rome, and he said, 'I just saw the blank-blank football scores. Go buy your boots.' "

The thing Coppinger says he likes most about the blustery gas pumper turned brewer, though, is that he is a "real" person, the kind you run into most in the country music, according to Coppinger. "He is exactly what he is," Ty said, "There is nothing phony about Billy Carter." That, Coppinger insists, is the main asset of country music.

"There are more 'real' people in this business than in any other music business," because "country is a musical picture of life."

And country's bringing its musical picture of life into the homes of America

via the airwaves. TV is changing the face of the promotional business. Hee-Haw, the nationally syndicated country music variety hour was first predicted to flop bigger than Orson Welles off the high dive. It just celebrated its 10th anniversary, albeit to the consternation of its critics.

Country stars are showing up more and more on big name specials and as guests on talk shows. Two recent films of a country flavor, indeed, spawned by country songs, "Harper Valley P.T.A." by Jeannie C. Riley and "Ode to Billy Joe" by Bobbie Gentry, were commercial, if not critical successes, especially at the drive-ins.

Coppinger knows this, especially since he has recently taken on the duties of West Coast liaison for Top Billing's clients. His new position will take him to the coast about six times a year to line up film and TV prospects for Top Billing's clients.

The move into TV pleases Coppinger. He says that's where his future and

country music's begin. "You can get to more people more quickly on TV," he said. "It excites me to be involved in that main cog. Look at Mel Tillis. He's hot now—why? Because of TV. And he'll tell you that's why himself."

On Coppinger's first L.A. trip last October, he lined up a made-for-TV movie for Billy Carter with Roy Rogers. Plans then were for it to be filmed in November and shown in January.

Drawing in properties like the movie can be a simple or frustrating business. In some cases, Coppinger said, "People call us because they know who we have. But a lot of that goes back to the good job we do promoting our people by sending out flyers about them, etc. I would say the majority of our business is done through people calling us because we do a better job than any other company in Nashville promoting our people."

There are, of course, sundry other ways, Top Billing sells its clients. But it's done very low-key by Top Billing employees. One reason for that, Cop-



Ty buck dances with Wendy Holcombe of Alabaster at a party at Tom T. Hall's house. His boss, Tandy Rice, looks on from the right side of the picture.



Tandy Rice, left, Minnie Pearl, center, and Ty Coppinger, right, share a joke on the porch of Tom T. Hall's plantation home outside Nashville.

pinger said, is because "all the hype in the world won't do any good if they can't use our people in the position that's open." Coppinger described a typical call for a client.

"I'll call up people and say, 'Look, we know you are doing a special the first week of September,'" Coppinger said. "We have got so-and-so available and they'll do you a good job, then we go into the client's assets. At the end of the call, we tell them that if they can use our client, we would appreciate it."

To entice "buyers," the people who hire entertainment acts, Top Billing and other promotional companies sponsor buying seminars in Nashville several times a year. At a seminar, a sort of mini-convention, the buyers are invited to participate in panel discussions, listen to new ideas and view acts that are "showcased" for the buyers' benefits.

These acts perform for the buyers in the hopes of attracting some attention, and some contracts. A showcase is a fairly

established means of securing attention for an act.

Another way of turning attention to its clients is throwing a party in their, or someone else's honor. It hardly matters who, as long as everyone is there.

We were there, at one given by Tandy Rice and Tom T. Hall to honor an executive of *People* magazine and some of its advertisers, long after Rice was featured in their magazine. The guests were flown in from New York and Chicago (and trained in from Auburn) and wined and dined all weekend, beginning Friday afternoon. The party, held at Hall's plantation-style home outside Nashville, was just a pitstop in the great promotional race.

And the guests were properly awed by the entire weekend. Friday night, one said, "You know, when we got back to our hotel today, they had a package waiting on us. It was filled with country albums, some western clothes for the party tonight, and a fifth of Jack

Daniels. I've never been treated like this before."

Impressing them is fine, Coppinger said, but what he believes truly impresses them is the quality of people that country folk are. "These people could be the most uppity ones around," he said, "but they don't act like 'stars.' They're just good people."

"Tom T. Hall knocks me out. He's done an album for kids, and he's doing another one now. It really impresses me that someone in his place cares enough about kids to do an album for them, but Tom T. is just down to earth and real. And there are a lot more real people in country music because it's the music of the people."

Coppinger, who got his job after playing Russian Roulette on the job market, now says the P.R. and media business is where he intends to stay. Shortly before affiliating with Top Billing, Coppinger had worked for Lavendar Blake, a firm whose clients included Ronny Milsap, the Statler Brothers, and Tammy Wynette. He worked on a territory basis for them, pushing the acts in his area. On the side, he did a little emcee work for package productions.

But he's found where his spirit lies with Tandy Rice and Top Billing. After joking around with some of his co-workers, he quickly points out, "You can see how much fun I have. You can see how well we all get along together."

Coppinger didn't have any tips for anyone interested in breaking into the promotional business. The only advice he had was "Don't be phony. Don't try to impress people. People in this business appreciate honesty and realness. That's the thing that's important."

That and hard work. The business, Coppinger said, keeps the Top Billing staff going "28 hours a day, 8 days a week."

Their work is apparently paying off. Country seems to be hitting a new high of respectability, partly due, Coppinger points out, "to the big crossover success of people like the Kenny Rogers, Crystal Gayles and Dolly Partons."

"If they cross over and bring country a new exposure, it helps country music in general," he said. And Ty Coppinger and Top Billing specifically.



mezzotint by Sheri Powell

The Felling

Fiction by Jonathan Hughes

Rollie, don't you forget to go over there tomorrow neither."

Rollie's brother reminded him from out of the west. He shouted at Rollie's naked and obstinate back, paused, and waited for an assurance. When he received none, he spoke again.

"You hear me?"

Rollie whirled on him, "Yeah! Sure."

The roily sun over his brother's shoulder filled Rollie's eyes with its dying light. It flared passionately between the two enormous pine trees beyond the faded, weatherboard house. Rollie peered at his brother—older, wiser than himself. His gaze searched for Ben's eyes. But the sun glared—and, suddenly, miraculously, as if Ben were transformed into some creature of air, the sun became his eyes. . . now angry in their redness. Then Ben faded from the afternoon, and Rollie was alone

. . . with the afternoon sun.

The sun was in the east. . . its light cool and fresh. The air was close and smooth—caressing him as he walked.

So what if Ben was older; twenty-one was not so old that a man was perfect and knew everything. And being a younger brother certainly made a living with him no easy chore.

His bare feet made valleys in the dusty road behind him. The morning's dew was almost gone now.

Twelve! He'd been twelve forever! His birthday—really only weeks away—had until recently seemed to grace the far side of an eternity. But then one morning—a cool morning like this one—he'd woken before the sun. The limpid pre-dawn glow outside the dusty window had seemed to amplify a new, peculiar thought in Rollie's head. Suddenly the accustomed anticipation of his birthday had seemed distant—like the memory of some past, horrid accident or the bold, breakneck thoughts that accompany such an experience. And now the symbolic passing of another year seemed to him coldly foreboding. Now. . . he didn't want it to come

An old jay screamed in an oak at the side of the road ahead.

Just in sight was his destination—the white, two-story house of the Widow Fletcher. The yard, the way Rollie remembered it, had once been warm, freshly manicured. Bursts of color—bright, supple—had invested the large front porch with an invitation to passersby. But now, with Bobby Fletcher dead these four years, Rollie could hardly see the porch for weeds, grass, and trash of neglect. And though the Widow still lived in the house, and folks said she was quite active, her living was—folks said—such that lent itself to

secrecy and stealth. They said she took in men—anyone. They said the house had sprung into use suddenly and darkly a year after Fletcher died. She seldom ever went out, Rollie knew, but they—those men—went in all right.

Now, as he threaded his way through the tangled yard to the cracked cement steps and the shadowy front door, he thought of what he would say to her.

She was at the screen door before he raised his fist to knock. She startled him.

She saw that.

"Hi there, little fella."

"Hi, ma'am—uh, my brother told me to . . ."

"Oh, you're here to help me clear the yard. Aren't you?"

"Uh, right. . . ma'am."

"Well, that's splendid. But it's gonna be a hot one today. We can get started later on. Come on in. Let me fix you a little something cool to drink."

Rollie hesitated; his face flushed.

"Come on. . . I won't bite you."

She swung the door back and held her hand out to him. He gulped and entered the dark house with her.

The night brought slow aches to his limbs. The job of clearing the yard had been a bigger one than he'd realized—a three-day job. Today, the first day, had been a long one—a hard one. Now the pinings that held his body seemed alien to the quietness close about his bed. The deep, night air was rich with dew. Heaviness hung all over his nakedness as he lay on top of the cool sheets, but not over his eyelids. Rollie could not sleep. A cricket symphony beyond his window screamed for him to doze, to dream; but his heart did not allow his ear to hear.

She had liked his work. She had given him two cool glasses of milk, sandwiches for lunch, and a kiss at the end of the day for his labors. He'd not expected the kiss. She'd just done it. And it wasn't like his aunt would have kissed him or his mother if she'd been alive. It was . . . well, warmer.

The coolness of the moist air on his naked parts made him suddenly aware of himself. He felt some force moving inside of him. Vague, unidentifiably small, and yet real, it darted about his guts like the tadpoles he never caught on the first or second try.

A breeze brought pine scent to his nose. He recalled her scent—new to him. It soothed him.

With sleep came the assurance that something small was growing inside of him.

That night he dreamed. It was cool, easy dream. He dreamed of his tree.

He called it *his* tree because, as far as he knew, he was the only one who knew it existed. He'd known it in greener, softer days, and grown to love it above all others. But now it displayed its years nakedly—in leafless brown, scarred by

stubs of branches that had rotted with the passing years. The old branches had fallen to the forest floor one by one until now the tree amounted to little more than a single tall shaft of weathered hardwood. Still he held it in reverence. Rollie's worship amounted to nights sleeping near the base of the tree, days of summer perched on top of it, and now it seemed even dreams of it.

It had stood since he could remember. A friend now, of all things it remained truest. He'd understood more and more as he had grown older that someday he must lose it to the law of the forest. He'd seen these laws at work—laws of decay, of putrescence, of change. And yet even now it stood so wonderfully separate from the world around it. As tall as its green counterparts in the forest around it, it was an entity unto itself. Nature seemed to respect this lone, marvelous, romantic notion in rising wood and clinging fungus. Also free—free it was of all the cares of its fellows. And alien to the forces of the wind and rain. No breeze ruffled it as in past days when delicate green underbellies had revealed waxy colors to the sky. No rain darkened it to an almost liquid, dripping mass of dusky green. No animal, like some fleeting fancy, could lodge in its mass seeking for itself a perfect home. And yet—high up in what used to be its top-most branches—a dark, comfortable-looking hole showed that in the past such an animal had made its home in this tree and flourished. . . if only for a season.

He had found trash—delicate curling of egg shells, soiled feathers and straw—in this hole: all that was left now of its sleek, winged occupants.

This was a part of Rollie's dream. He—small, helpless, sheltered in such a haven—waited, trusting the tree with his safety. Though a rain storm raged outside the hole, he slept, dry and untouched, inside the bosom of his tree. In soft and deep release he slept and the sleep of his mind became that of his body.

When morning brought his waking, he smelled softly the rain of the dark hours before. The dream swept suddenly back on him, and he became aware of the strange, awkward notion that the tree, regardless of natural laws or laws of time—that *his* tree would never fall.

A trickle of sweat rolled into his right eye, and he dropped the rake he held to wipe it away. The afternoon sun was especially fierce. He looked about him, his hands on hips, surveying the swath of his labor. He smiled slightly, pleased, grasped the tool, and began to work even more furiously at his job in order to gain some advantage over an encroaching darkness.

She was there at the screen door, shouting for him to quit for the day and come inside to freshen up. He did not look at her. He only stopped, laid down the tool and climbed the steps until he scented her sweet musk. His eyes remained on the floor as she took his hand and led him into the warm house.

He walked with her through the mosquito humming of the house to the bright but not spotless kitchen.

"You've been busy today, Rollie. I never thought I'd see that yard look so good again."

"Yes'm." He stared at her.

"Why, you're doin the work of three boys—yesiree!"

His eyes fell to the dingy floor. He modestly revealed one row of even, white teeth.

"Here, you drink this here water. I poured it for you from out the frig just now."

He quaffed it as if it meant his life. The taste of it was strange to him—sweet as her scent. He returned the glass to the kitchen table with care.

"Thanks, ma'am." She said nothing. She seemed pleased just to look at him. "I . . . better be going now."

"Oh, do you have to go already, Rollie?"

"Yes'm."

"Okay, Rollie, I'll see you then."

"Yes'm—bye!"

He was out the back door before she could lead him back into the dark heat of the rest of the house.

Outside, the last light of the day was gold on the eastern mountain tops. The trees were rapidly losing their power to keep evils in check under them. Thus the shadows ran like ink until the earth seemed a vast inky sea. Through this, Rollie hurried homeward.

He approached the old Fletcher barn as he hurried along. The hay still sagged from the front of the loft as if a beard—unaffected by time. His mind opened, and suddenly he remembered that afternoon during the summer.

He'd seen Hollis Roberts and Audrey Chandler walking at the bend of the road and had hidden, for some reason he'd never understood, to wait for them to pass. Maybe he'd sensed their peculiar, unapproachable familiarity as they'd strolled toward him. They had not passed his hiding place though. They'd disappeared instead into the path leading the short distance to the barn. He'd naturally become suspicious and had decided to find out where they had gone. So he'd crept up the road to where he commanded a view of the front of the old grey barn. The sight had both intrigued and revolted him. In plain view, in the rectangular window of the hay loft, were Hollie and Audrey—standing totally naked in a close and tight embrace. Rollie had watched for a moment, stunned until they'd disappeared into the loft and then run quickly around the bend lest he be caught spying.

Now, it seemed only a gloaming vision to him. And yet he'd relived the moment many times in bed at night—wondering—holding himself.

He was not totally unsure of all that he envisioned. He'd heard the boys talk—his brother among them.

He knew about girls and their nipples—milk jugs, he liked to think of them. He knew about their thing. And he knew about the way they moaned as men lay on top of them at night while he held himself.

He lifted one of the last loads of dead and dying grass from in front of the porch and carried it to small, continuous fire in the back of the house. The flame spurted into life as the new fuel was tossed onto it. And after seconds of furious activity, it sputtered back to its low flicker, its passion spent. He turned and walked slowly back to the front yard.

Soon he was finished. The yard was closely trimmed—its

debris cleared away. Rollie smiled in his satisfaction. He would be glad to get back to his usual chores, the ones Ben had almost too readily agreed to do in his absence. He climbed the steps. The dark screen door remained empty. The sweat ran down his suntanned face to where it dripped from his small, angular chin to his thinly-muscle chest. From there the bead of cold moisture traveled downward, disappearing in the looseness of his overalls.

He listened. He heard nothing, though the scent of her was strong. He called her through the screen.

"Mrs. Fletcher?"

Her appearance startled him.

"Call me Maggie, Rollie."

"Oh, okay."

"Well, I see you're through now. And a fine job you've done—a man-sized job."

She spoke softly. She did not look past his eyes. . . which saw only her full smile.

"Come on in, Rollie. My, But it's hot! Come on in and let me pay you for your work."

He hesitated.

"Come on in...I won't bite you; we're old friends now."

He looked into her warm eyes.

"Come on—we're in no hurry."

He stepped slowly into the warm, dark, sweetly scented house.



Squirrels

The squirrels on the grass
Do not attend class,
Nor read comrade Marx
As they sit in their parks.

They circle the trees,
Unmoved by disease.
They've no use for a flower,
No squirrel's finest hour.

They disparage elections,
Nor have they selections
Of philosophies
For shrubberies and trees.

Look—see one slip down,
His nose on the ground,
His tail in the air,
Unaware of Voltaire.

Squirrels screech and chatter,
But it's not a great matter—
Just a scuffle for a nut.
How the winner will strut!

Squirrels often go crazy
At folk that are lazy,
Reading the fine books
Of sheisters and crooks.

They're embarrassed by
The doctrines of "Why?"
Or pluralities of worlds.
Some people are squirrels.

Joe Bird

woodcut by Christopher Payne

Rowe, the FBI and the KKK

by Gillis Morgan

This is about the murder trials of three members of the Ku Klux Klan who were charged with the slaying of Mrs. Viola Liuzzo on March 25, 1965, in Lowndes County, Alabama. Sources include two newspapers—*The Birmingham News* and *The New York Times*. I am also including myself as a source because as a reporter for *The Birmingham News* I covered three of the four Liuzzo murder trials—two in Lowndes County and one in federal court in Montgomery.

In compiling the courtroom testimony and dialogue for this paper, I have combined and utilized reports from both the *News* and the *Times* to present as full and as accurate an account as possible of what happened in these trials. In some cases, I have relied on my memory in describing some of the scenes and some of the persons involved in the trial.

THE TRIAL

While the defendant glared and the rest of the court sat in stunned, heart-thumping silence, a stocky red-haired man in a neat blue suit began to tell the story of a murder.

The murder witness was Gary Thomas Rowe Jr., 34, of Birmingham, Alabama, a paid informant for the FBI who said he was with three members of the Ku Klux Klan the night of March 25, 1965, when the Klansman gunned down Mrs. Viola Liuzzo, 39, of Detroit, Michigan.

Mrs. Liuzzo had come to Alabama to work in the voting rights drive for black citizens in Selma. As part of that work she had participated in the Selma-to-

Montgomery voting rights march which had ended in Montgomery March 25, 1965. She was using her car to provide transportation for some of the participants in the march when she was killed.

Charged with first degree murder was Collie Leroy Wilkins Jr., 21, of Fairfield, Alabama. A heavy-set young man with close-cropped hair and blue eyes set in deep sockets, Wilkins looked intently at Rowe as they sat about fifteen feet apart

in the spacious old Lowndes County courtroom.

The courtroom is on the second floor of the white-stuccoed green-shuttered courthouse that dates back to the Civil War. It is located in the unincorporated community of Hayneville which had a population of about 400 persons. The courthouse is fronted by a court square surrounded by businesses, including a grocery store, a general store, and a

Auburn journalism professor Gillis Morgan was a reporter for the Birmingham News when he won awards for his coverage of the famed Liuzzo murder trial in the mid 60s. Gary Thomas Rowe, a former FBI informant, was the prosecution's star witness.

At press time, Alabama authorities sought to extradite Rowe for trial in the murder of the civil rights worker, and the story is one of the hottest in the country.

barber shop. Buttercups grow wild near the rambling and rusting barbed-wire fences lining the road into town.

The shooting of Mrs. Liuzzo had occurred in Lowndes County on a section of U.S. 80 that is surrounded by pastures and creek-bottom swamps. Shortly after the slaying of Mrs. Liuzzo, Rowe and Wilkins and two other men—Eugene Thomas, 42, and William Orville Eaton, 41, both of Bessemer, Alabama—were arrested by the FBI.

Because of the national interest in the voting rights drive, President Lyndon B.

Johnson announced the arrests of Rowe, Wilkins, Thomas and Eaton. President Johnson identified all four of the men as members of the Ku Klux Klan and said that Mrs. Liuzzo was murdered by the enemies of justice who for decades have used the “the rope and the gun and the tar and the feathers” to terrorize people.

Wilkins, Thomas and Eaton were indicted under a federal law of conspiring to deprive the participants of the Selma-to-Montgomery march of their constitutional rights. Also, the same three men—Wilkins, Thomas and Eaton

—were indicted on first degree murder charges under Alabama law by a Lowndes County grand jury.

All charges against Rowe were dropped by both federal and state agencies. He identified himself on the witness stand as a paid informant for the FBI who had infiltrated the Klan about five years before the Liuzzo murder. Ironically, part of Rowe’s duties with the Klan was to serve as an investigator of prospective Klan members and to study potential problems confronting the Klan. Perhaps Wilkins, Thomas and



May 7, 1965. A handkerchief pulled over his head to ward off the heat, reporter Gillis Morgan uses a temporarily installed telephone outside the Lowndes County Courthouse to phone-in the trial story.

Eaton were thinking of Klan meetings and discussions with Rowe as they looked at him from across the courtroom. Instead of trying all three defendants, the prosecution had decided to try Wilkins during the first trial and follow up with trials later for Thomas and Eaton. However, Thomas and Eaton were at the Wilkins' trial and they sat at the defense table with Wilkins and his defense attorney, Matthew Hobson Murphy Jr.

As Rowe cleared his throat to begin his story, spectators, jury members and newsmen seems to lean closer so as not to

other white companions were leaving a black cafe on March 9.

"As we got ready to leave," Rowe said, "the man who had been pointed out to us came over and said: 'God bless you boys, y'all do your job, I've already done mine'."

Rowe and the trio got back into their car and drove around Selma for awhile. They went by the Brown Chapel AME Church, the black church that had served as the headquarters for civil rights workers before the march to Montgomery began. At about 7:30 p.m., they drove back to downtown Selma and were

back." They ducked down just as the light turned green. The two cars accelerated to cross over the four-lane bridge.

The section of U.S. 80 just across the bridge is four lanes for a few miles before it narrows into a two-lane highway. A mix of businesses—drive-ins, car lots, restaurants, small groceries—occupy either side of the highway. After they had crossed the bridge and traveled for a few miles, Thomas said, "Aw right, y'all can get up now."

As Rowe was talking in the courtroom, he was calm and poised, but a noise from outside began to interfere with the telling of the story. Circuit Judge T. Werth Thaggard, a white-haired gentleman who repeatedly illustrated the common sense that goes with being a judge in a rural area, called for a recess and dispatched bailiffs to check on the noise. The noise sounded like a truck changing gears as it went up a long hill. Judge Thaggard detected that it was preventing the jury from hearing all of Rowe's testimony.

The jury was made up of twelve men, all white. The list of prospective jurors had included three men who said they belonged to the Ku Klux Klan. All three were struck.

Jury members included Clifford McMurphy, a farmer; George Spivey, nightwatchman; Hugh M. Tuberville, farmer; Dan Lee, mechanic; Roy O. Loftin, farmer; W.F. Autrey, machinist; Edmund Saltee, farmer; Billy R. Cheatham, bookkeeper; C.H. Rogers, electrician; Rober B. Smith, farmer; and E.L. Hollingshead and T.R. Hollinghead

This was the day of the rally at the end of Selma-to-Montgomery march. More than 20,000 persons from across the nation had joined the march...

miss a word. For the next hour and a half he talked about the cold-blooded killing of a human being.

"We arrived in Montgomery about 10 a.m.," Rowe said. This was the day of the rally at the end of the Selma-to-Montgomery march. More than 20,000 persons from across the nation had joined the march in its final day to stage a rally at the steps of the State Capitol in Montgomery. During the rally, Rowe, Wilkins, Thomas and Eaton drank beer in Montgomery, later driving to Selma.

"The highway patrol stopped us and gave us a ticket (for speeding) about 25 miles from Selma," Rowe testified. The men were in a red and white Chevrolet Impala. Thomas was driving. The speeding ticket was confirmed through testimony from a state trooper.

The four men went to the Silver Moon Cafe in Selma and drank more beer. While they were drinking, Rowe said a man came to their table and asked them if they recognized a man in the cafe. Rowe told the court that when they said no, the other man told them: "You ought to know him . . . he's one of the men out on bond for the Reeb killing." The "Reeb killing" referred to the slaying of the Rev. James Reeb, a Unitarian minister from Boston. He died from beatings in Selma when he and two

driving down Broad Street, the main street, when they pulled up at a red light beside a white 1964 Oldsmobile.

Rowe said a white woman was driving the car and a black kid was sitting next to her in the front seat. It was Mrs. Liuzzo, who was on her way back to Montgomery to pick up more participants from the march and bring them back to Selma. With her in the car was LeRoy Moton, 19, of Selma.

Rowe quoted Wilkins as saying: "Look a there, baby brother . . . I'll be damned, look a there."

"Let's get 'em," Thomas said. Thomas was driving. Eaton was in the

It was Mrs. Liuzzo, who was on her way back to Montgomery to pick up more participants from the march and bring them back to Selma.

front seat with Thomas. Wilkins was seated in the rear right, and Rowe was seated in the rear left.

The Liuzzo car and the Klan car were side by side at the traffic light on the Selma side of the Edmund Pettus Bridge which spans the Alabama River.

Thomas told Rowe and Wilkins to "get down below window level in

(related), county employees.

McMurphy was serving as foreman of the jury. McMurphy was a sandy-haired, middle-aged man who had an "early morning" voice, one that reminded you of the good smell of coffee cooking in the kitchen and a breakfast table heaped with big biscuits, heavy syrup, fresh butter, grits and eggs. He had strong

arms, like a man gets when he works outside for a living.

The noise from outside the courtroom had stopped. The bailiffs had returned, and Judge Thaggard made his way back

Thomas: "We're going to take 'em tonight."

Rowe: "Gene (Thomas), we're wasting our time. We better get back to Selma."

'Every time we go to take them we run up on somebody.'

to the bench to resume the trial. Some spectators and some newsmen began to put out cigarettes as the jury members filed back into the jury box. Rowe returned to the witness stand and picked up from the point where the Klan car was following Mrs. Liuzzo's car that night a few miles out from Selma:

Wilkins: "How far are they going?"

Thomas: "Before we get to Craig, let's take 'em." Craig is the name of an Air Force Base that was located just outside Selma.

At this point, Rowe said both cars were speeding down the highway close to Craig, and that Thomas pulled out his revolver from the compartment up front and said: "Get your gun, baby brother."

Rowe: "Who?"

Thomas: "You."

Rowe said he looked out the window and saw a jeep with two military policemen in it. He warned Thomas about the military police. At the sight of the police, Thomas let his car drop back, while Mrs. Liuzzo continued ahead at the same rate of speed.

Later, Rowe said, Thomas pushed the car to speeds of up to 95 miles an hour in order to catch the Liuzzo car. Once again, when they almost caught up with the speeding Oldsmobile, two highway patrol cars were spotted along the roadside. Again they slowed, and momentarily lost sight of the Liuzzo car as it sped away, but they caught up with it again. Two trucks coming down the highway prevented any action this time, according to Rowe, who quoted Wilkins: "Every time we go to take them we run up on somebody."

Thomas: "Can't last much longer, they'll be in Montgomery."

About three or four miles down the highway, the red and white car of the Klansman nudged itself closer to the Liuzzo car. Rowe said Thomas debated whether or not to bump the car or force it off the road.

Wilkins: "Bubba, don't touch that car. We may get paint on us and we'd be caught for sure."

"She looked around and just as she looked, Wilkins fired two shots through the front (driver's window) of the car," Rowe said. Then both Wilkins and Eaton emptied their guns into the car, according to Rowe, who said he laid his gun across the window and pretended to shoot, but did not. Rowe looked back and noticed that the Liuzzo car was continuing in a straight line.

Rowe: "I believe you missed."

Wilkins: "Baby brother, I never miss. That so 'n' so is deader than hell."

The Klan car disappeared over a hill and raced back to Montgomery. Eaton and Wilkins tossed their empty shell cases out of the car, according to Rowe. They went on to Montgomery, bought gas, and then drove to Bessemer on the Birmingham interstate. Rowe said they went to the VFW Club on the "Bessemer super highway" to get an alibi.

Rowe quoted Thomas: "We'll go by and get Bob to get an alibi for us." Rowe asked him who Bob was. "You'll know him when you see him," Thomas responded.

'She looked around and just as she looked, Wilkins fired shots through the front (driver's window) of the car.'

During this point in his testimony, Rowe's voice quavered and his hands twitched slightly. He was showing signs of nervousness as he neared the end of his story. His appearance in the courtroom was under the watchful eyes of several FBI agents, detailed for his protection.

Rowe quoted Wilkins: "If you'll pull along side of it, we'll take it."

As they started around the car Wilkins added: "All right, men, get ready."

Rowe said Thomas handed his gun to Wilkins. Thomas accelerated the car, Rowe said, and pulled almost parallel to the Liuzzo car. Rowe said Wilkins put his arm about elbow length out the window.

The Klan car was now in such a position, according to Rowe, that the rear window on the right where Wilkins was sitting was about even with the front window of Mrs. Liuzzo's car.

They never saw Bob, Rowe said. They were told by a man at the club that Bob was drunk and in the back room.

Thomas: "Let's go to Lorine's."

When Rowe asked who Lorine was, Thomas responded: "Lorine's a real good friend of mine, the organization and the sheriff."

Rowe said they went to Lorine's (he did not give an address) and they found "three ladies in there."

Rowe said they stayed for a beer and Thomas assured them as they left: "I've got an alibi for us. She's helped us several times before."

Again Rowe quoted Thomas: "Let's go by the dragon's house . . . tell him what a good job we did."

Rowe said they drove by the home of Robert Creek, the grand dragon of the Alabama Klan, but the lights were out.

They decided he was asleep and drove away.

At this point, Rowe said, the four men separated after Thomas drove back to his house. Rowe said he got in his car, drove around for a while, then drove to the Central Park area in Birmingham and called the FBI. He had notified the FBI that they were going to Montgomery, and had been told to go with the Klan members and contact the FBI when he got back.

Rowe emphasized in his testimony that he did not know that the Klansmen planned to kill anyone until it happened. He said he asked Thomas how he planned to stop the car (Mrs. Liuzzo's car) and Thomas told him to watch.

The 19-year-old youth in the car with Mrs. Liuzzo—LeRoy Moton of Selma—said that he and Mrs. Liuzzo left Selma about 7:30 p.m. to return to Montgomery to pick up other civil rights workers. He said when the shooting occurred Mrs. Liuzzo was going about 60 miles an hour. When another car pulled along side, Moton said he heard glass breaking, at least three times in rapid succession, and Mrs. Liuzzo slumped against the door. She had been shot in the head and was dead. Moton said he put his foot on the brake and tried to steer the car, but it eventually left the road and crashed into a pasture fence before it stopped. Moton was not injured.

He said there was no response from Mrs. Liuzzo as she lay slumped in the seat. He said he saw a car coming from the opposite direction and sensed that the occupants were unfriendly. Moton slumped in the seat, pretending to be dead, as someone from the other car walked over to the Liuzzo car and shined a flashlight into it. Moton did not move. The person soon left, got back into the car and drove away.

Moton waited a few minutes, then went to the highway, where he flagged down a truck that was transporting civil rights workers back to Selma. The truck continued to Selma where Moton told authorities what happened.

Mrs. Liuzzo was killed by a .38 caliber bullet that smashed into her head, about an inch to the front of the left ear. Her husband had tried to talk her out of going to Selma. She had telephoned him March 16 from Wayne State University,

photo by M. Lozar

Michigan, and said that she wanted to go with three or four other people from the university to work in the voting rights drive in Selma. When Liuzzo asked his wife not to go, she responded: "We've got to go."

Mrs. Liuzzo was working on a degree at Wayne State, as well as working in the pathology department at Sinai Hospital. When President Johnson announced the arrest of the Klansmen, he said Mrs. Liuzzo went to Alabama "to serve the struggle for justice."

The defense attorney, Matthew Hobson Murphy Jr., liked to be called Matt Murphy, and to be identified as the imperial klonsel of the United Klans of America, Inc. Murphy was 51 years old, stood six feet three and a half inches tall, and had long arms that he liked to wave in the air while trying to emphasize a point in court. His suits were conservative and reflected quality in the material, but they were always wrinkled.

At the beginning of the Liuzzo murder trial, he had called for Lyndon Baines Johnson, the President of the United States, to serve as a witness. Facing the courtroom, Murphy shouted: "Lyndon Baines Johnson, President of the United States of America. Is he here, Mr. Bailiff?"

Murphy had contended that the President should be a witness at the trial because of the announcement of his

clients' arrests and the manner in which the President had identified the Klansmen with the murder of Mrs. Liuzzo.

During the questioning of the first twenty prospective jurors, Murphy asked them if they had heard the President denounce the defendants as members of the Klan. Judge Thaggard kept Murphy from going into details of the President's statement when it appeared that this would slow proceedings to a stand-still.

In his cross-examination of Rowe, Murphy lost his temper. He pounded the defense table, crushed a hat with his hand, shoved his chair back, and trembling visibly, slammed the hat to the floor.

The flareup came during the questioning of Rowe by Murphy who charged that the witness was receiving payment for testifying in the Wilkins trial.

Murphy: "Didn't you tell me that the FBI had offered to give you 580 acres in Minnesota which was a farm and give you sufficient money to operate it for the rest of your natural life if you would cooperate with them and help them break the back of the United Klans of America?"

Rowe: "No sir, you instructed me to put that information out, Mr. Murphy."

The conversation Murphy referred to occurred the day of the arrests. Rowe had been detained by the FBI longer than the other three. Apparently thinking Mur-



phy would suspect that the FBI tried to bribe him, an agent told Rowe before he went to the attorney's office that he would say he had been offered land and money in exchange for information. Rowe said he told Murphy this and Murphy, unaware that Rowe was an FBI informer, in turn told him:

"We'll make it 550 acres of land and, I believe, \$160,000."

Later, Murphy called Rowe "a damned liar" and offered to take a lie test.

Throughout his cross examination of Rowe, Murphy tried to portray Rowe as a troublemaker and a man who violated his sacred oath to the Klan. Part of that oath, as read by Murphy, is:

"I most sacredly vow and most solemnly swear I will never yield to bribe . . . persuasion . . . offered by any person . . . for the purpose of obtaining from me secret information. I will die rather than divulge same, I swear to God."

Marion D. Williams, firearms specialist with the FBI in Washington, D.C., testified that the bullet taken from Mrs. Liuzzo was fired from the gun Wilkins used that night.

Murphy asked: "Do you mean to tell me you can tell what gun that bullet was fired from by an examination with a microscope up there in Washington, D.C.?"

"Yes," Williams said.

When Murphy cross-examined Moton, he asked: "What did you do to Mrs. Liuzzo while you were there in the car?"

Moton: "Nothing."

"Did you reach over there and touch her?"

"No."

"Did you lay a hand on her?"

"No."

Murphy used only 21 minutes to present his defense, which included six witnesses, one to cast doubt on Rowe's testimony concerning the timetable

Rowe was a "damed liar, a perjurer and as treacherous as a rattlesnake." He added that the state's key witness was a modern Judas who sold his soul for "thirty pieces of silver."

Finally, Judge Thaggard called a halt to Murphy. The closing argument for the prosecution included a segment by Joe Beck Gantt, assistant state attorney general, who worked with Arthur Gamble circuit solicitor, in presenting the case for the prosecution.

"Murder is murder," Gantt said. He identified himself as a segregationist, but appealed to the jury not to let the racial issue inflame them against carrying out justice. Gantt's approach was clearly an appeal for the jury to take this case simply as a murder case and to ignore the resentment built up during the weeks of civil rights demonstrations in the area.

The assistant attorney general charged that "even the high echelon of the Ku Klux Klan looked upon the slaying of Mrs. Liuzzo with shame. At this point, Robert Shelton, imperial wizard of the United Klans of America, muttered in the courtroom: "Aw, bull . . ."

Murphy's approach, on the other hand, was clearly an effort to exploit that assumed resentment.

Solicitor Gamble told the jury they could not overlook a cold-blooded killing even though they may not agree with the purpose of Mrs. Liuzzo's trip.

"She was here and she had a right to be here on our highways without being shot down in the middle of the night," Gamble said. He urged the jury to be courageous for the sake of Lowndes County. "Don't put the stamp of approval of chaos, confusion and anarchy."

Judge Thaggard gave the case to the jury on Thursday and the twelve men deliberated for four hours and fifteen minutes without reaching a verdict. At 7:50 p.m., Judge Thaggard sent for the jury and asked the foreman, McMurphy, if the jury was near a verdict.

"We haven't reached a decision and we don't feel to be near a decision," McMurphy said.

"Well, have a good night's rest," the judge said. He adjourned the court until 9 a.m. Friday. The jury was sequestered in Montgomery, a few miles away from Hayneville.

Rowe: 'I didn't know the shots were going to be fired until they were.'

In one "double" question, Murphy asked Rowe if he wasn't a paid informant for the FBI and a pimp. Objection to the question was sustained.

Objections were also sustained on sudden questions put to Rowe as to whether he knew the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, if he were a paid agent of Fidel Castro or if he were a paid member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Then Murphy asked Rowe why he didn't try to stop the shooting.

Rowe: "I didn't know the shots were going to be fired until they were."

Rowe's testimony had been corroborated by state troopers and FBI agents in particular to the points where Rowe testified about the speeding ticket and where he said Eaton and Wilkins threw their shell cases from the speeding car. FBI agents and troopers searched the area and did find shell cases.

followed by the Klansmen and five witnesses to destroy Rowe's reputation.

And then came the closing arguments.

Judge Thaggard stopped Murphy after he had stayed on a white-supremacy tangent for one hour and seven minutes. The Klan attorney shouted across the railing to the jury: "I'm proud to be a white man."

He used the term, "niggers," when referring to blacks and he mocked Moton's testimony by sing-songing, "Yeah, no, yeah, no."

Murphy: "That's a twenty-year-old nigger talking, gentlemen. The black man hasn't got any sense. He hasn't got any morals or courtesy or decency or anything, when he sits up there on that witness stand and says, 'yeah' and 'no' in front of this honorable white judge."

Murphy waved his arms wildly and shouted that Negroes and Communists are taking over the country. He said

The next day at 1:18 p.m., there was a knock from inside the jury room. McMurphy reported: "It's locked this minute just as tight as on the first ballot we took."

Judge Thaggard: "If there is any way in the world to get a verdict, I think we ought to get it. We ought to stay here a little longer."

A little less than three hours later, the jury told Judge Thaggard that they were hopelessly deadlocked. "As much as I regret to declare a mistrial . . . we have nothing to do but to thank you for your service," Judge Thaggard said.

"We thank you," McMurphy said and the jurors turned to leave and go home. The final vote had been ten to two for conviction.

Although jury members had agreed not to make public who had voted for conviction or acquittal, several of the panel, including McMurphy, Tuberville and Loftin, were willing to say they voted for conviction. After a little prodding and nudging by some fast-questioning reporters, the two jurors who voted for acquittal were identified. The two jury members who voted for acquittal, even when a compromise had been reached to reduce the charge to manslaughter, were Cheatham and Lee.

When questioned by reporters, Cheatham said he did not accept Rowe's testimony after it was emphasized that Rowe had sworn before God and then broken his oath. He referred to the Klan oath of secrecy pledged by the FBI undercover agent when he became a member of the Klan.

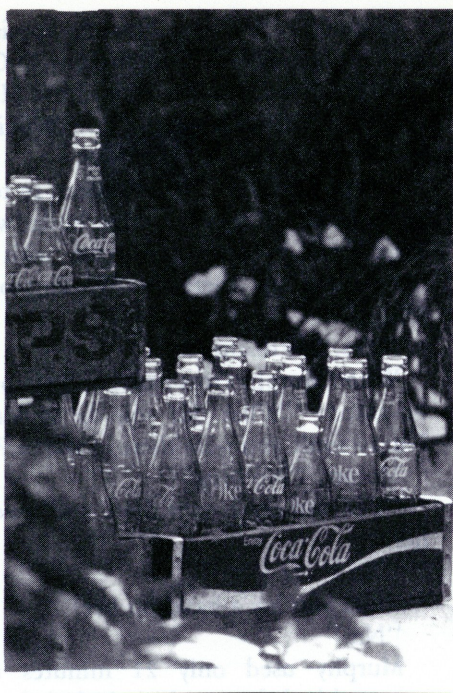
"Me and him (Cheatham) pretty well are on the same side," Lee said.

The two jurors said they wanted Rowe, who had been on the FBI payroll for the past five years, to be tried with the other Klansmen.

"I'd like to have seen him up there," Cheatham said, "very, very much so."

"I agree," Lee said.

Other jury members expressed the opinion that the verdict might have been for conviction if Rowe had been under indictment with other defendants. McMurphy said there was no sectional or racial reason for the decision. "It was just a different set of eyes looking at the same evidence," he said.



Asked if they disliked the FBI undercover agent because he informed on the Klansmen, Cheatham responded: "I'm mad at him for that."

"You darn right," Lee agreed.

Lee was also asked if he agreed with Murphy's closing argument concerning white supremacy.

"Pretty well," he answered. "Like I say, he's a lawyer."

"And a sharp one," Cheatham declared.

Juror Saltee, however, was there to disagree with the views of Cheatham and Lee. "I think many of us were insulted," he said. "He (Murphy) must have thought we were ignorant to be taken in by that kind of thing."

Then the jurors filed down the stairs and collected \$31 for their five days on the jury.

EPILOGUE

In October of 1965, the state tried Wilkins again in Lowndes County. This time, however, Attorney General Richmond Flowers assumed the duties of chief prosecutor under a state law which gave him jurisdiction in criminal prosecutions.

There was also a different attorney representing the defendant. Matt Murphy has been killed August 20 in a car-truck collision near Tuscaloosa. The new counsel for the Klansmen was Art Hanes, a former mayor of Birmingham

and a former FBI agent.

Flowers announced that he had assumed the responsibility of prosecution in the Wilkins trial because he would not be subject to "local political pressure." The attorney general's tactics included a request that the Alabama Supreme Court disqualify eleven members of the jury on the point that these eleven members had said, under questioning in court, that they thought white civil rights workers were inferior persons. The request was denied.

Rowe's testimony, supported by federal and state investigators, was still the basis for the state's case. Hanes introduced new witnesses, including a Klan member who testified that Rowe had tried to cause trouble on another occasion. Another defense witness testified that Wilkins was in the VFW Club in Bessemer from 8:45 p.m. to 9:15 p.m. on the night of the murder. This would have made it impossible for Wilkins to have been in Lowndes County during the time of the shooting.

This Lowndes County jury deliberated one hour and 43 minutes. Spectators cheered when the jury brought in its "not guilty" verdict. The jury makeup was twelve men, all white.

It was obvious to those who attended the two trials that the "low key" approach applied by the prosecution in the first trial was much more effective than the aggressive approach used by Flowers. Hanes' decision not to use Murphy's racism in his closing argument also appeared to have been effective.

On December 1, 1965, this time in U.S. District Court in Montgomery, the three Klansmen stood trial before U.S. District Judge Frank M. Johnson Jr. on charges of conspiring to deprive participants of the Selma-to-Montgomery march of their constitutional rights. John Doar, head of the Civil Rights Division for the Justice Department, served as prosecutor. Art Hanes continued as defense attorney.

The witnesses, the testimony and the contents of the federal court trial were practically the same as in Lowndes County, but this time when the jury came back to the judge, following eight hours of deliberation, to report that they were "hopelessly deadlocked," Judge Johnson told them they had not

commenced to deliberate this case long enough to conclude that "you are hopelessly deadlocked."

He referred to the "forth or fifty" witnesses in the case and the numerous exhibits (about sixty) before telling the jury that the trial is expensive to the defendants and to the government. Judge Johnson added: "You should consider that sometime this case must be decided. Another jury would be chosen in the same manner and from the same type of people as you twelve men. There's no reason to assume that another twelve men would be more competent to decide than you are."

The defense attorney objected to Judge Johnson's remarks to the jury. "I think they are prejudicial to the defendants." Judge Johnson assured Hanes that his objection would go into the record.

The jury resumed deliberation at 10:15 a.m., following the charge by Judge Johnson. The jury broke for lunch at noon and after returning to the jury room, they turned in their verdict shortly after 2 p.m. Friday, December 3, 1965.

The jury found Wilkins, Thomas and Eaton guilty of conspiring to deprive U.S. citizens of their constitutional rights. They were sentenced by Judge Johnson to ten years in federal prison.

After the jury verdicts were read in court, Judge Johnson said: "In my opinion that was the only verdict you could have reached in this case . . . Of course, I could not tell you that beforehand. That was your responsibility."

In September of 1966, the fourth trial stemming from the slaying of Mrs. Liuzzo was held in Lowndes County. Thomas was tried for murder and was acquitted.

It was the first time in the history of Lowndes County that blacks had outnumbered whites on a circuit court jury. There were eight blacks and four whites on the jury, which deliberated 85 minutes before turning in its "not guilty" verdict. Rowe did not testify in the fourth trial. Flowers, who served as chief prosecutor again, said he did not call Rowe to the stand because other jurors had said they did not believe his testimony about the murder. Defense witnesses established an alibi for Thomas by saying that he was at the VFW Club at

Brighton on the night of the murder. Flowers said the trial reflected "a complete breakdown in law and order."

The Birmingham News library shows that Eaton, while waiting for an appeal, died of a heart attack March 9, 1966. Wilkins served his sentence in a federal prison until October 12, 1973, the date of his parole. His mandatory supervision ended May 24, 1977. Thomas served his sentence in federal prison until November 21, 1973, the date of his parole. His mandatory supervision ended May 29, 1977.

Mrs. Liuzzo had been buried in Michigan a few days after her slaying in Alabama. Michigan Governor George Romney had proclaimed two days of mourning for her. Political dignitaries and civil rights leaders from across the country attended her funeral.

CONCLUSIONS

This has been a story of a murder trial. Who is to say what place it might have in history? It simply happened.

Historians have consistently debated whether or not an event in history should be chronicled through the strength of cold facts or enlivened through the imagery of the historian. As a case in point, historian Benedetto Croce (1866-1952) felt that "the deed of which the history is told must vibrate in the soul of the historian." By combining personal knowledge with dialogue from the account of two newspapers, this presented a chronicle of the events in a manner that enlivens them for history.

The Birmingham News and *The New York Times* reported on the people, scenes, and abstract factors involved in the trial and its setting. Major points included speculation on whether an all-white jury from Alabama's Black Belt would convict a Klansman charged with killing a civil rights worker from Detroit; analyses of the impact of a national murder on a rural community; the impact generally of the Ku Klux Klan as a factor; and the credibility in that community of a paid informer for the

FBI.

Obviously, the real thrust of the first trial was Rowe's testimony and Murphy's attempts to discredit that testimony through cross examination. Both newspapers emphasized that Murphy's tactics were primarily to discredit Rowe and to inject the civil rights issue. Both papers pointed to the significance of the issue of the Klan oath that Rowe had "broken" in his role as an undercover agent.

Too, both papers sensed that Murphy's appeal to racism was of course invalid as a premise except for a pointed appeal on behalf of his client to people he assumed were racists. This assumption almost proved to be his downfall, as the *News* noted:

He (Murphy) shouted, spoke softly, cajoled, provoked, laughed, smiled, fumed, raged, shook, pleaded, flung his arms in the air, pointed to his "never" button, lashed out as what he termed "niggers and white niggers" as he sweated his way through an hour-long argument.

Murphy's words visibly embarrassed most of the Black Belt jury members, the judge, the prosecution and most spectators.

'Matt Murphy didn't endear himself to me,' said Clifford McMurphy, foreman of the jury, who voted for conviction in the trial.

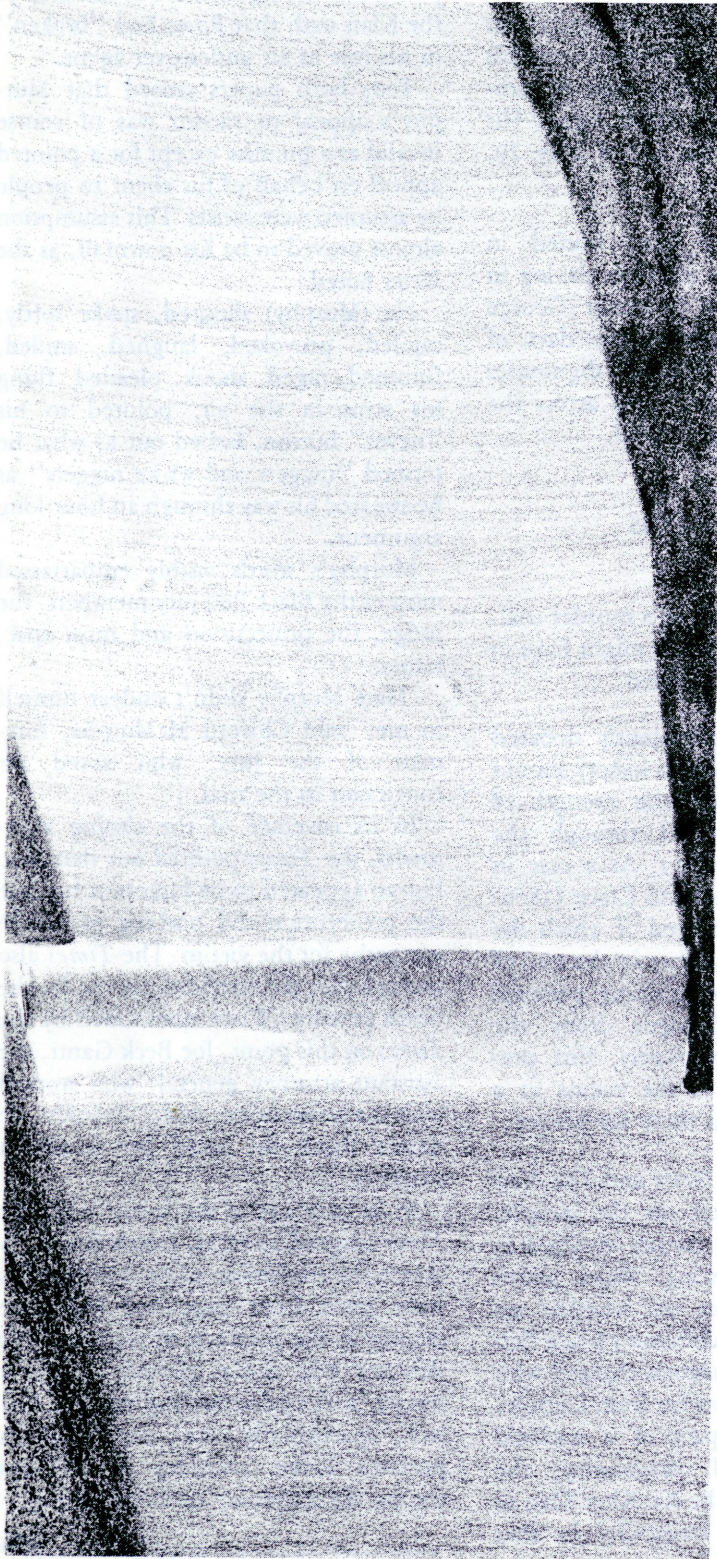
In its coverage of the closing arguments, the *Times* pointed out that Mrs. Liuzzo appeared to be forgotten because the prosecution did nothing to arouse sympathy for the victim. The *Times* also stressed that the state did not ask for the death penalty. When questioned by the *Times* on this point, Joe Beck Gantt, the assistant attorney general, who worked with the prosecution, said: "Frankly, we didn't think we could get it (death penalty)."

In its coverage of the initial trial, the *News* assigned an artist, Dutch Booth, to sketch the courtroom scene. His sketches were given front page and full page display in the portrayal of the trial. His sketches will always provide dramatic insight and understanding of that first trial, particularly the sketch which portrays Rowe pointing at Wilkins during his testimony on the shooting.



Trailblazing

by Marvin Harris



lithograph by Joe Perrett

A chilly, humid afternoon wind sporadically assailed the mountains, but my foremost concern was to keep my partner in view. He had lengthened his lead after lunch and had held it the last three hours.

I hated morning hiking . . . noon hiking, afternoon hiking, and night hiking. I hated that double-edged western axe my partner shouldered.

Nights in camp he often shined and sharpened it and invited me to test its blade and grip its hand-smoothed belly, which I always did; and he often preached the company's myriad policies.

He the teacher, I the student, we acted the roles. Never criticize campers, he said. They pay our way. Some days he pointed out animal signs. Lost, or hungry and foodless, I'd be thankful, he said. I agreed. Northern tree trunks grew thicker foliage, he said. A lost person would walk upstream, he said. Never was he even bewildered, much less lost, he said. I think he knew I hated him.

Down at basecamp in bull session I had heard my partner was among the best with an axe. He'd won first and third two years in a row in the spring logging contests. Also I had heard of a smark aleck's trouncing on the trail, and I saw my partner quite capable of whittling another taller and stouter than himself and likewise half his age, though now my brim let in sunlight and I could not clearly see him.

When again in basecamp I'd buy a Smokey the Bear hat at the trading post, I decided. It would cost more than a week's pay. I'd buy it and on the Gulf Coast, peddling magazines after college, I'd point it out to the girls and tell impressive tales. Then it might be worth \$32.50.

In the distance I saw my partner marching, and I envisioned a wind-up key in his back. Silently, I cursed his glistening axe, my curses, those mountains, my partner and his westernness; but that gap remained steady until he halted to axe a fallen tree across the trail.

I knew he would hew near perfect V's; always he hewed near perfect V's. By the time I had closed he had unbranched the tree, had halved it, had cleared the trail of it, was wiping his forehead with his neckerchief. He swigged on his canteen and offered it to me.

"No thanks."

We hiked.

"You keep up, heah, boy."

"Yeah."

"Yeah?" He stared at me, eyebrows furrowed, munching on crackers.

In his beard of blond hair the cracker's crumbs helped him mock a mountain goat, I thought.

"Yes, sir."

The sun bleeding in a cradle of two peaks, we hiked an hour and sat on the trail. He took from a pocket of his mackinaw a knife and a sharpening stone and rhythmically honed the knife's blade. Thirsty, I longed for my two lost quart canteens, decided to buy a two-quarter and not to lend it.

"This a sharp blade, boy," he said. "Dangerous too." He gave me the knife and I shaved hair off my wrist.

"Sharp," I said.
 He took it. "Shavin' fuzz won't tell a-body nuthin', boy. See heah." He shaved a swath of hair off his wrist. "See."
 I nodded.
 "Nigras ain't got no hairs, boy," he said.
 "Negroes."
 "Niggers," he said. "Nig-gers."
 He folded and wrist-motioned the blade forward. Several times he did that.
 "Try it," he said.
 "Nah."
 "Heah."
 I tried to whip the blade open. The knife sailed into the scrub.
 "Sorry."
 "Sorry hell."
 I found and held it out to my partner.
 "Sling it," he said.
 "Might lose it."
 "You'll find it."
 The blade stuck.
 "Nigras ain't good at nuthin'." He snatched the knife.
 I shouldered my pack and hiked fast the climb to the camp, leaving my partner far behind.
 At the camp I found an empty water jug between the latrines and the showers, hastily bedded pine needles near a pine and lay supine on them, and rested my feet on the jug, my head on my pack. I covered my eyes with my hat and tried not to think, not to hear, but too soon my partner's cadenced steps told me it was time to rise.
 "Bam! Bam!" he said. I didn't move, hoping he would cut and gather the firewood. "You're dead, boy," he said. I hoped he would go but I knew I was pipedreaming. I hoped he would go and that a hunter would shoot him for a buck (a doe never looked so craggy). "Up, boy," he said, nudging me with a boot till I got up.

We gathered wood and I started the fire and he whittled on a stick and I cooked and thought of the work we had to do tomorrow to ready the camp for the campers. I thought of home—the wine, the drugs, the highs—and in my mind cursed the newspaper ad inviting collegians to explore the wide open west. There, too, I cursed my mother for not discouraging me strongly enough and my old man for not being rich.

To myself, I wished I were home in Mobile and hoped I had learned those camping techniques well enough so my partner wouldn't have occasion to embarrass me when I tried to help a tyro and wondered why I had wanted to be a guide and wished I hadn't come and hoped I could pass the written test at the end of the summer so I could come back next year as a full-fledged guide instead of as an assistant. I wished the food had strychnine in it as my partner ate it.

"Too much salt," he said.

You should have the chance to cook supper tomorrow, I thought.

"One day, boy I'm gonna hav' ta take time ta show ya howta cook. Myself, I thought . . ."

He gazed skyward behind me and I turned to see.

" . . . all nig-gers learnt howta cook from their Aint Jemimas."

In an oak were bats and circling it were several more.

After supper my partner scraped and scrubbed and washed and rinsed and dried the dishes and pots and utensils and spouted company policy and told me about "you all people" being scarce in this area of the country. He said I was the first of "your kind" he had ever really talked to man-to-man.

I feigned interest with an occasional uh-huh and staccato interjections; I was remembering. I remembered my girl Valerie, now in college in Texas, and how she and I had spent last summer. I remembered other things, but mostly I remembered when I was younger and had not yet grown into a boy.

Children in Europe and me

Too often I have paid the bill
 for passions you consumed in half hunger,
 while I starved staring.
 I settling in shame for leftover pieces
 you dropped on dirty floors
 by wine bottles your clay ankles overturned.

But even when I take your scraps,
 I always awake
 just as empty the next morning.
 feeling slightly sick
 from swallowing too-rich dreams.

Rick Harmon

From One Entrapped

Love a lovely, abandoned brick building
 Despairing down by the depot and sidings,
 Not for its bright, stamped-tin advertising
 Nor for the bricklayer's proper Flemish bond,
 Though these be pretty—yet common—
 Enough to compel the new lover's admiration;
 Rather take up quick tools, time and patience,
 And chisel away the mortar and bricks stopping
 Up, for too long, the storehouse's windows.
 Let in light, dispel the dust, the staleness
 Of an unused space. As for the treasures
 Discovered there—none of Tutankhamen's,
 Certainly, only simple pieces—enrich
 And enjoy them with love, your gentle, sure art.

M.H. Anderson

To Pay Respect

by Bill Caton

"It looks like it's going to rain today doesn't it, Maggie?"

"Yes it does, but you know, I've always liked rainy days."

"Yeah, I can remember a time when I used to pray for rain."

The green and white striped canopy shuddered with the breeze and the loose ends made an indifferent dull thud, like the sound of a distant hammer. On the border of the canopy were the words Eternal Hollow. In the midst of the flowers whose fresh scent had been lost to decay, there stood a small mound of red clay, which formed its own stark monument to the man it concealed in its depths. As I peered into the red clay it was as if I could see and hear and smell all that had transpired in the years that had passed.

He was getting on in years even then. He was a little man about 5-foot-7 and had one of those faces that you didn't talk about because you didn't want to insult an old man. The most outstanding feature on his old face was his left eye, because you never knew which direction it was going next. He was like that, unpredictable; he almost always had something to say. Sometimes though he'd just sit and stare, and I could look through the thick glasses and watch the blurry image of his left eye as it wandered around in his head.

"Pete get over here and help me finish this baby, I'm afraid it's going to get away from us, and then we'll really have a mess."

"I told you that was too much concrete for just me and you to finish."

"Well, here, take this bullfloat and go all the way down this thing." The bullfloat was heavy and the sun was hot. I don't know how the old man stood it. He never complained and hardly ever said an unkind word about anybody.

"Damn Mr. Crane, I told you not to do this much at once. What are you worried about anyway? You know they wouldn't have said anything if we had taken another day on this job."

"Well, there's no use complaining about it. We've got too much to do for you to be wasting time complaining."

The heat must have been getting to Mr. Crane. That statement was harsh for the old man and I knew it. I had finished my job and all I could do was wait for the old man to finish. It seems as though it was always that way, he did the least amount of complaining and the most work.

"Well Pete, my boy, that's some wunnerful concrap even if I do say so myself."

"I'm glad you think so Pop. At least we're through with another job."

"Well don't worry Pete, there'll be another one just like it tomorrow."

"Not for long though Pop, pretty soon I'll be back in school."

"Hugh—well let's get the tools and head'er south."

"Yeah."

"I'm following you today Pete, you go the way I showed you yesterday."

"Can't Pop, I don't remember it."

A blue-white flash that pierced the dead humid air and the resounding explosion that followed brought me to the realization that the storm was drawing near.

"Pete, Pete? Did you see that lightning. It's getting closer."

"Yeah, it is. I wish we had been here for the funeral." Even as I replied to Maggie I found myself drifting off again, almost helplessly, as the canopy seemed to sag under the prospect of the approaching storm.

"It's gonna come a flood Pop."

"I hope not Pete, my boy. We've got a lot to do."

"Well, the rain doesn't care whether or not we've got a lot to do Pop. It's gonna come anyway."

"Well, let's get as much as we can done before it rains."

"Why are you always in a hurry Pop? Always go go go, that's all you think."

"Hand me a short 2-by, I've got to straighten this baby a little, we don't want Martin to think we do bad work."

"You know Martin won't check your work, what are you worried about? Why do you always talk about Martin like he was standing over your shoulder?"

"Hand me a stake, we've got to put a kicker on this thing, we don't want the form busting on us."

"It's raining Pop."

"Let me get this last stake down."

"Damn, you haven't got enough sense to come in out of the rain."

The green hills seemed to vanish in the approaching darkness and the leaves hung drearily from the spreading shade trees as if they were half dead themselves. The gray-white stones faded into obscurity as the hills rolled away into the distance until they seemed almost to merge with the passing cars. Out to the right, toward the richer section of the graveyard the monotony of the small stones was broken by the beautiful monuments raised to the dead men.

"Pete, let's wreck these forms and see what this baby looks like."

"OK Pop. This one was one of the worst ones yet, Martin wasn't lying when he told us it was going to be a mean one."

"It's going to be a pretty wall, just look at it!"

"Yeah, well, we gotta do two more sections just like this one."

"This one sure did turn out pretty though didn't it. Not even the first drop of honeycomb in it."

"If you say so."

"Huh, well let's get going and get this next one ready to pour. We want this job to be a good one, don't we."

Whatever you say."

Maggie stirred me into the present with her insistent tugging at my shirt sleeve.

"Pete! Look at the trees blowing over there!"

"Yeah, it's raining over there and it's coming this way."

"Well it doesn't look like it's going to take long to get here."

"Sure doesn't."

"Pete, why don't you tell me what you're thinking about?"

"Oh, I'm sorry Maggie, I didn't mean to ignore you. You know it's strange though."

"What, what's strange?"

"Well, the things you remember about somebody."

"Like what?"

"Hmm well, I was just thinking that Mr. Crane didn't believe in evolution."

"What?"

"Yeah, I remember exactly what he said that day. I wonder why?"

"I don't know. It's just one of those things that you know means something, but you can never quite figure it out."

"I guess that's true. Anyway, that day we were just talking about how hot it was and about some dog that was lying in the shade in his pen. Then Mr. Crane said that no matter how hot it was he would find the energy to climb a tree if that dog got out of its pen."

"Well, as usual I tried to make something out of that statement and said, no matter how much men has evolved he's still got some ape in him, because we'd both be able to climb that tree quick under threat of danger."

"That sounds like something you'd have said then."

"Yeah, it does. Mr. Crane looked shocked and said, 'You don't believe in that shit do you?' That's an exact quote too. Then I just said, 'Sure, you mean you don't?' We both were in a state of shock, but for two different reasons. He was shocked that I could believe something so contradictory to the Bible and I was shocked that anyone could be so ignorant that they could not believe in something so obvious as evolution."

"He must have really been different. I wish I had known him better."

"I wish a lot of people had known him better."

"Well at least you can be glad you knew him."

"Yeah, but I wish that those who were around him had given him more respect than they did. I really wish I had given him his due back then. Then though, all I could think about, was how I was going to be somebody! I was going to be well known and he would die and never be missed, his life measured in forty-hour weeks."

The first, large, show drops of rain had begun to fall with an irregular rhythm, on the striped canopy. They struck the dirty canopy, left a slight impression on the dusty material, rolled off to the ground and were absorbed.

"Pete, we'd better go, we're going to get caught in the rain."

"OK"—But I stood still.

"Well Pete, are you coming? Forty years old and you still don't have enough sense to come in out of the rain!"



photo by Bruce Hyer

Syrup Sopping & Dulcimer Playing In Loachapoka On A Fall Sunday

by Ford Risley

It was October 14, and hundreds of people came to the tiny village of Loachapoka for an old time Syrup Sopping and the 7th Annual Lee County Historical Society Fair.

It was a perfect day for a country fair—crisp and clear, with just a slight Autumn chill in the air.

The museum grounds were filled with people walking among the various exhibits of craftsmen and cooks. An old iron pot of field peas simmered over an open fire. Brunswick stew and coffee were served. So on and so on. In the bed of a pickup truck a man dressed in an apron and cap ran an old hot-type printing press once used to print the Tuskegee News. There was a wood carver

and quilt makers, but few more interesting than 82-year-old Mary Thorpe. Sitting in a folding chair Mrs. Thorpe deftly performed the old Indian craft of basket-making with pine straw, as her daughter talked proudly to onlookers of her mother's skill.

Several Auburn University students and faculty were there. Jake Shaw, a junior in forestry, played an Appalachian mountain dulcimer made for him by a man written about in one of the Foxfire books. Dr. Charlotte Ward of the physics department may seem at first an unlikely quilter, but seemed rather at home. And students of the Agricultural Engineering Department showed off "Old Nancy," a 1905 steam tractor which took them five years to restore.

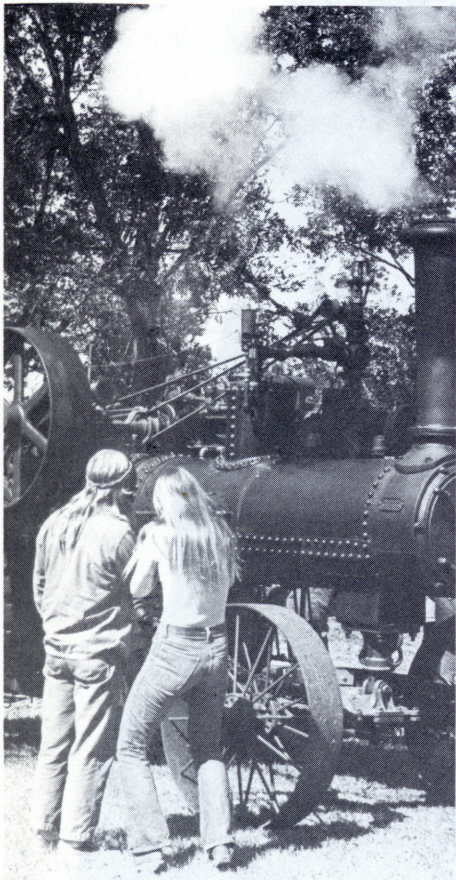
Across the street from the fair, members of the Ruritan Club and Loachapoka Improvement Club sponsored an old-fashioned Syrup Sopping. People of all ages watched in a kind of curious amazement as an old mule walked the trace, grinding the cane into juice. Next to the mill a large open fire cooked the juice into a rich golden syrup.

Members of the Ruritan Club sold cans and jars of sorghum and cane syrup. And ladies from the Improvement Club served country biscuits and sausage with syrup. No one seemed to mind the long wait in line for, of course, it tasted good.

In the park, tables and chairs were scattered about as families and friends sat together under the pecan trees enjoying the good food and fellowship.

As the day's activities began to wind down, members of the Historical Society proudly unveiled a new historic marker telling something of the history of Lee County and Loachapoka. A woman laughed as she read that Loachapoke meant "land where turtles live" or "turtle killing place" in the language of the Indians that first settled there.

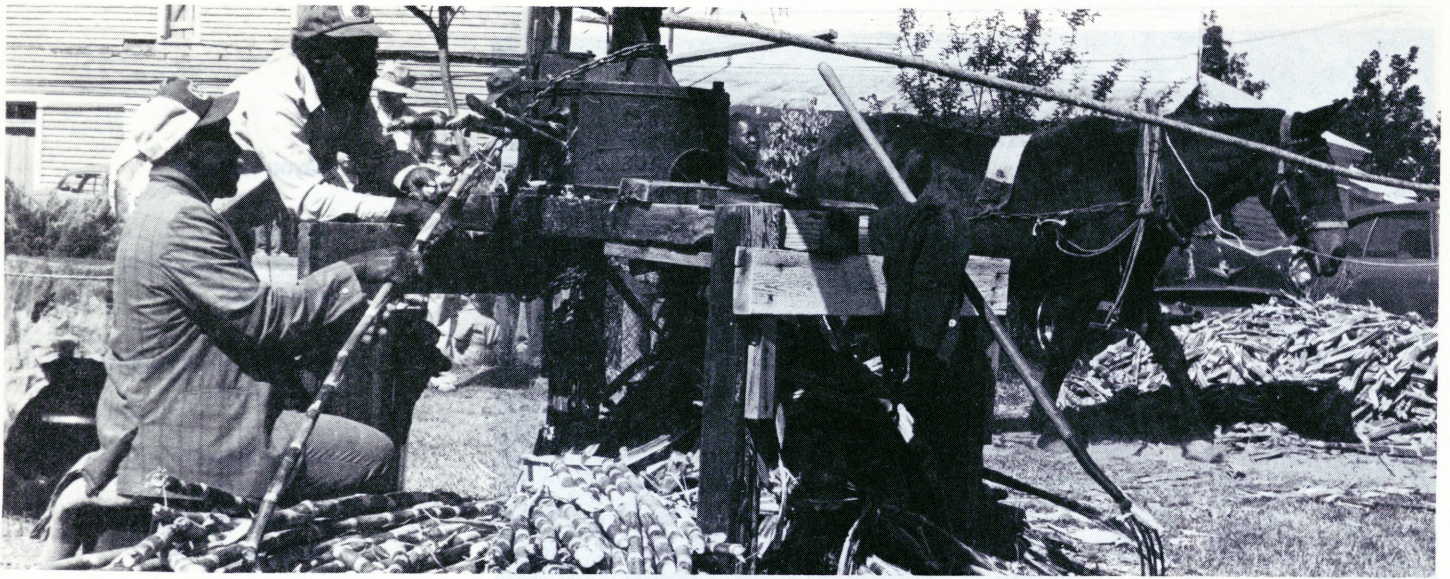
Later, as a bluegrass band played, "Old Nancy" rumbled down Highway 14 towards Auburn. The Fair and Syrup Sopping would soon be over, but it became obvious that "land where the turtles live" was apt. Because, for a day at least, time moved slowly in Loachapoka.



"Old Nancy"



Everyone enjoyed the bluegrass entertainment



Making sugar the old-fashioned way



Sorghum and syrup selling



Professor turned quilter



Mrs. Mary Thorpe



When I was young, and dreams were believable.
 When the first rocketship reached Mars, and I was one of the crew.
 When the finish of the Indy 500 was heralded by my passing under the checkered flag.
 When animals talked, and I rode a dinosaur into the school.
 When John Wayne called me "pardner."
 When I fought dragons and married mermaids.
 When I beat up Ricky and won Linda,
 And we cruised down the road, Linda and I,
 in a red Ford convertible,
 our two kids and dog in the cream white back seat.
 When good was nice, and bad was naughty.
 When no one died, they just went away for awhile.

All my childhood dreams are packed up now, in toy-filled cardboard cartons
 awaiting the Goodwill van.

Where my dreams will be recycled,
 subtly changed.
 My childhood dreams exist now in unused pockets of memory,
 to be released by an old scent,
 or sight,
 or sound.

The Goodwill van pulls away with a clashing of gears and growling of diesel.
 My dreams pull into the right hand lane.
 I can no longer believe in them,
 Somehow in obtaining the possibility of fulfillment I lost my belief.

Guy Parsons

photo by Bruce Hyer

bayou mansion

like fog
 in hollow costumes
 we drifted

through Bogart and Garbo
 like queens

on the coast of
 north africa
 we beat our chests
 knee deep

in ivory
 in other voices
 tongues never heard

i was fear

lingering in the
 musk-traced symbols

layered on your back
 left

by the Door gods
 secret dialogues of the past
 umlauts of arcane beauty
 a ballet of faces
 each
 a mask of itself

between heartbeats
 i reached
 with telescope fingers
 to an orcus sunrise
 in your eyes
 screaming sighs
 humming

chanting

forehead to forehead
 like phantom priests
 we burned all the firewood

before dawn.

D.M. Petrizzi

into the gothic heartland

I

just as night's fingers
began to scratch at us
we left the garden gorged
on new splashes of the spring's colors
and the ghosts of each other

and clutching swollen balloons of doubt.



we had opened our veins
and bled only skeins of ice:

the words
soared like
stone birds

f
a
l
l
i
n
g

from a great height.

II

so i stepped out to see the doctor
who warned me right away
one man's masoch will be
another man's de sade.

i catch your drifting i said
but i've got this aching in my heart:
something in the way she moves
is vaguely unfamiliar.

ah, yes, nodded doctor dann
i'll bet the black holes
in the pupils of her eyes
remind you of the black hole
sucking at your heart.
son, you've contacted monostigmata
an exotic and endangered disease.
all the hangnail surgeons and thumb specialists
in the world can't save you now.
i suggest you take plenty of oxygen
and call me in the morning.

III

i went down to the parlor 'round about midnight
to confer with my undertaker
and hear his version of the plot:

"You must ask certain basic questions:
was that figure on the stairs a werewolf
or just lon chaney, jr.?
what are the nights of least resistance?
which one of us is here?"

"just remember:
having known too many long-distance lovers,
at heart she's untouched by human hands.
so she's practicing to be your part-time virgin,
though her face is just another place in space."

back inside these pointed arches and rid vaulting
we discuss the psychic weather of mere acquaintances
and the probably fate of aldo moro.
as the darness tenses with the seeping light of dawn,
i realize that everywhere inside the gothic heartland
the estate of mind is a mansion in decay.

A.J. Wright



Eudaemonia

are we

of tooth and nail
of suck
and grin
spinning
between matter
and
form

blackhole illusions
quasar silent
as rainbows
both ways inward

are we

circumventing an
oppression
that folds egos
into
watchful ears
a tube
of memory
inside every breath

are we

hordes

of yapping raving lathering
mongrels
yowling
as lunatics
in a world
where
people plant children
in earth

for nourishment
and

women are hung
like fur tongues
in a cooler

am i

doomed
to be alone
on my knees
gathering

sifting
artifacts of
the present
on tomorrow's beaches
aglow
in the brown air

twitching

the copy of
a fork
handcuffed around
my neck
encrusted
with echoes of
distant guns

will i

half-paralyzed
by your thighs
linger
wet in my dreams

or

place my mask
beside
the marbled tables
the stained glass
decay
and
enter

immune

a gadfly
with cool shoes.

D.M. Petrizzi

Again

She touched me and the wound was gone.
Her hands eased the agony.
Yet, she too, had to go;
I'm bleeding again.

Mark J. Skoneki

Thoughts Before the Crash
(in memory of a spitfire and the older brother it owned)

Daydream awakens to nightmare
with frightening speed.

A face bulging stare,

"Oh my God!" "Oh my God!"

as you find yourself sliding
face first into chrome
and steel-life nothingness—
a fiery forever nowhere

"Will she think I did it on purpose"

"For her"

"Or for lack of"

Sliding into the knowledge
your white-knuckle gripped shield
is useless
and won't protect you
from life
or its goodbye.

"Will she cry or shrug?"

"As a minister I never liked,"

"sweeps me under a grassy rug . . ."

Your right foot desperately tries
to stomp out death.

Tires laugh like staked harpies,
while they burn.

". . . with words read rote,"

"as he tries to sound emotion"

"for a wooden box"

"he never knew."

No-life passes before your eyes.

Only sentences,
which collide and fragment
like your future.

"And what about my brother?"

You wonder,
knowing it's too late
to ever learn.

Dylan Thomasson

Epitaph

Along the trail of those who've failed
I stopped in seek of rest
Then from the clear, a lonely seer
Appeared with synthemesc.
As he passed, I softly asked
(My will had broken down)
If he could spare the smallest share
To bring my strength around.
He said to me, "My son you're free
You don't need it like I do

A lonely man, indeed I am
But my life is nearly through."
"Mine," I cried, with tearful eyes
"Though young is but a shell
My soul has died—for every lie
Didst hit its target well."
He looked at me with sympathy
In silence shook his head
Then down the trail, the banshies wailed
As I took the synthemesc.

Mike Donahue



LLOYD MALONE

The moments pass,
the days into nights.
And slowly the memories fade
—of my love
—that part of my life,
Once filled with thoughts of you.

Vicki Vann

Like old letters and souvenirs
neatly packed in a storage box;
So are the memories of you,
deeply stored within me;
Only to be thrown out
—one day.

Vicki Vann

FENTON FARNSWORTH

GOES OUT ON THE TOWN!

by Bill Holbrook

WHAT DO YOU WANNA DO TONIGHT, MARILYN?

I DUNNO. WHAT D'YOU WANNA DO?

WANNA TAKE IN A MOVIE?

NAW.

ATTACK OF THE SUNSHINE LADY

WANNA GO TO A BURGER JOINT?

NO THANKS.

WANNA CRUISE AROUND TOWN?

UH-UH.

BOWLING?

ICK!

PINBALL? PING-PONG?

NOT IN THE MOOD.

GO TO A DISCO?

SORE FOOT.

GET DRUNK?

NOT THIRSTY.

FOU UNION
UPC GO HOME!
-WE DID!

R.I.P.
HERE LIES
THE KOPPER
KETTLE

WELL, THAT LEAVES JUST ONE THING!

YEAH...

ARE YOU SURE THAT YOU WANNA DO IT?

I'M SURE...

GOOD. I JUST HOPE THE LIBRARY ISN'T PACKED TONIGHT!

ME TOO.

RALPH'S

1978

The Real Craziness Of It All

Fiction by Marian Motley

The August that I was thirteen the world was predicted to blow to bits. That was the summer that outlines of crosses mysteriously appeared in AME church windows, and one Sunday night after services, old Nigra Francis disappeared. That was the same summer that Geneva Futral pulled a trailer to Cottonton and put a big sign up in front with a hand on it. Above the hand was written "Sister Geneva," and below it, "Healer and Palmreader."

My cousin Sammy from Newville came to live with my family in Cottonton that summer. He was there the night Willie, the little colored boy who lived with old Francis, came for Daddy after midnight scared and crying because Francis hadn't come home from fishing that afternoon. Mama got Sammy and me up and we all went with Daddy and Willie and rode through the woods looking for Francis and calling out her name. Willie showed us Francis' favorite fishing spot and Daddy drove right down to the river calling her, his voice echoing back all the way from the Georgia side of the Chattahoochee. From the back window of the Scout I could see the reflection of the moon on the river. It seemed to be going crazy on the ripples, and even though the Scout was standing still, we seemed to be moving with the moon as it floated down the river toward daylight. Willie started crying when we didn't find Francis, and even though Sammy didn't know her, he cried, too. It was real pitiful to see frail little Sammy crying over somebody he's never even seen. He looked so white there in the moonlight, and next to Willie, too.

The next morning Francis' good Sunday clothes were found neatly folded on a riverbank, and that afternoon her drowned body was dug up from the Chattahoochee. The nigras all said that somebody had put a "hoo-doo" on Francis, had sprinkled evil powders in her shoes to make her lose her mind. Daddy found out from somewhere else that, years before, Francis had been treated in an insane asylum, but had been released. She had been fine for years, as far as anybody knew, until that Sunday night.

All of Francis' relatives who had moved off up north came home for the funeral. The quarter behind our house was full of the excitement of the death and the homecomings. Mama had to help Daddy at the store all week—business always picked up with a funeral—leaving Sammy and me at home all day with Sibie, who let us do whatever we wanted.

Sibie, though, didn't like the idea of me going to see a fortune teller. More than anything, I wanted to go to Geneva Futral's trailer to get my palm read. Geneva's son Frank pumped gas for Daddy at the store. He lived there in the trailer with his mama and his old blind grandmother who

had a stuffed parrot, and he told me how politicians had traveled miles and miles just to have Geneva read their palm. I was dying to know if the world was really going to end right away, and I figured that Geneva was the one who could tell me

Sibie quoted some verses from the Bible and told me how gypsies would pick your watch off your arm while they read your palm, but I didn't even have a watch, and besides, Geneva Futral wasn't a gypsy—she was a palmreader and healer.

At his home in Newville, Sammy had all sorts of snakes that he played with barehanded and took out of their glass cages to sun under a lightbulb he had strung up over the bathtub with an extension cord. He even had a tarantula spider that he caught live rats for. That's why I couldn't understand his being so afraid of an old dead parrot, but he was. It took threatening and bribing to get Sammy to go with me that day to Geneva's trailer, but when I finally got him there, things got worse.

When Sammy saw that stuffed parrot he turned so pale I thought sure he would faint. The old grandmother, yellow and withered, was sitting in the living room in a rocking chair beneath the perch with the parrot on it. Her eyes seemed lost in their sockets and her mouth seemed to have swallowed her lips. Geneva read palms in the back of the trailer behind some bead curtains. Sammy and I were waiting for Geneva to get ready for us, Sammy, staring at the parrot; me, hypnotized by the bead curtains as they stirred in the path of the electric fan, when all of a sudden, the grandmother started rocking faster and faster in her chair and cussing about how one of them damn cats of Geneva's had killed her parrot. She said there hadn't been a drop of blood on him, that the cat had sucked his breath. Sammy and I had backed to the trailer door by the time the old grandmother started out of her chair. We ran every step of the way home.

Sammy cried and screamed and told on us for sneaking off to Geneva's. Sibie gave him garlic tea to cure worms and give him color. She said: "A chile don't look dat pale and have dem kind o fits lessen he got worms!" I worried about Sammy after that. He had always been quiet and delicate, but not scaredy, and not a tattle-tale. I tried to think back to when I was his age—he was only barely ten—and remember if I had been so scaredy all of a sudden. When I fussed at him about it, he just said that there was a difference in live things like his snakes and spiders and dead things like that parrot and that old lady.

It was dead things Sammy was so afraid of, so I knew why he got sick the day of Francis' funeral. Daddy cancelled Justice of the Peace court that morning of the funeral so we could go. Mama let Sammy stay at home, but the three of us went to the AME church and sat on the back bench.

It was hot in the church. Fans with Jesus in the Garden were in motion, stirring up smells of asafetida and vanilla



flavoring. Programs with Francis' picture on front were passed out, and as the music started, the front row of women, all dressed in white, started to sway from side to side, chanting. Mama said that they were moaning for Francis' soul. Nigras passed out and had to be revived with spirits of ammonia and then fanned until they got their strength back. I looked around for the window with the mysterious cross in it, but the Reverend said it only appeared at night. Daddy promised we'd go back one night.

After the funeral, Daddy had to hold afternoon court for Mister Harold Links who had been caught stealing hogs from the Futrals. Harold claimed he thought they were wild hogs and didn't belong to anybody, but after all, the hogs were in the Futral's yard. Besides, Harold Links was mean enough to steal because he had a son two or three years older than I who was in Special Education in school. His name was James Owen and everybody said that Harold beat him and called him an idiot because he stuttered.

When we drove in the driveway at home, Sheriff Murray was sitting in his car with the door open, smoking a cigarette, looking real serious. Mama and I went on in the house, but Daddy and the Sheriff stayed outside talking for a long time. After some time, Daddy came to the back door and told us that Harold Links was drunk and had tried to shoot Frank Futral. Nobody knew where Harold was, but his wife said he had been drinking all day and acting crazy and was bearing a grudge against Daddy and the law. Daddy wanted Mama to take Sammy and me and go to my Grandmother's house in Phenix City since you never could tell what a man in Harold Links's state might do, but Mama said she'd feel much better at home. She started making biscuits and frying streak-o-lean for supper. Daddy and Sheriff Murray ate some supper and then filled up a jar with hot coffee and went out to find Harold Links. Sammy wasn't sick anymore; he had been piddling around on the piano when we got home from the funeral. Now he sat by the kitchen window, watching a lizard

illustration by Beverly Phillips

on the screen and eating a piece of streak-o-lean between a biscuit, in nibbles.

We were at home alone that night when all the confusion really started—just mama and Sammy and me. Daddy was still out looking for Harold Links with the Sheriff when we heard the loud bump that shook the whole house and all the screaming in the quarter. A few minutes later, somebody started beating on our door. Mama got panicky, worried that Daddy had gotten shot by Harold Links, or maybe that the person at the door was Harold, but she peeped out the curtain and then took the lock off the door and opened it. A nagra woman had run all the way from the AME in the quarter, through the woods, to find Daddy. She said that right in the middle of the Reverend's sermon the Devil hisself had come and made complete dark and then fire . . . , but before she could finish her story, Daddy rushed in the door to telephone the Phenix City Fire Department. In the meantime, he said, the vounteer firemen from Cottonton were hauling their water wagon over to the church to try to put out the fire. They were setting up a pump in Tyson's Pond to try to keep the flames from spreading and burning up Cottonton before Phenix City could get there. Daddy said he felt like everything would be all right if nobody hurt themselves in the panic. He said folks were grabbing up clothes and bags of groceries, running around moaning and screaming that the end of the world had come for sure.

You'd have thought that Sammy would be hysterical after all this. Even I was scared. But he loved the excitement of the end of the world and the noise and the fire. By the time the Phenix City Fire Department got to Cottonton all the fire had been put out and Sammy lost interest in the whole thing. He went over to the piano and started picking out little songs.

When the danger of the whole town burning was over, Mama made Sammy and me go to bed. It was already eleven and Daddy and the Sheriff still had not found Harold Links. It made me scared to think of Harold roaming around outside somewhere, maybe even looking in the windows at us, and Daddy out there with him. No telling what Harold might do. I asked Sammy if it scared him to think about it and he just said, "No," like he didn't want to talk at all, so I just laid there thinking about the craziness of it all and thinking back over all the crazies I had ever known, and all the kinds of crazy.

They said Francis had been crazy, but I sure couldn't tell it when I knew her. But then she killed herself. And left Willie. Harold Links wasn't really crazy—just mean and poor—but then when he got to drinking, he started acting like a madman. Daddy had had Harold in court before for driving his car through the plate glass window of the grill to get a country fried steak, when he was drunk one night. Then there were crazies like Cannonball King who left her husband and wormy children and ran away with the fair, to be shot out of a cannon. And the colored boy who worked in the yard for Mama and then started being a girl. All crazies in one way or another. When Sheriff Murray came to hunt Harold Links, I heard him ask Daddy if we put something in the Cottonton drinking water that caused everybody to lose their cottonpickin' minds.

As I started off to sleep to the lull of the attic fan I wondered if maybe I was crazy too, and folks were just nice to me and teachers gave me A's because they felt sorry for me. I looked over at Sammy. I wanted to talk, but he was asleep. Lying there with the moon shining across his face, he looked pale again like that night in the Scout. He looked alot younger than ten lying there frail, and sort of smiling in his sleep.

I must have gone to sleep soon afterward because I didn't know when Daddy and Sheriff Murray returned without finding Harold, or when James Owen Links came for Daddy around two o'clock and, in spite of his stuttering, made him understand that Harold had come home and was shooting out windows and waving the gun in the air, cussing and scaring his family to death. When they finally caught Harold, he was still swinging the fuse box by its wires that he had snatched off the side of the AME, causing all the fuses to blow, leaving darkness, then fire and confusion, earlier in the quarter.

When I woke up Sunday morning, Daddy was sitting at the kitchen table reading the Sunday paper. His JP Ledger was open on the table in front of him to Harold Links' case. Nothing was written in the "Disposition of Case" column. Daddy spoke into the paper telling me that Mama had gone to church, but had decided to let Sammy and me sleep late because of all the excitement of the night before.

"Well reckon where Harold Links is, Daddy?"

"Trying to get admitted to Bryce's so he can be declared insane," Daddy answered without looking up from the Sunday paper.

"Why would anybody want to be declared *that*, Daddy," I persisted.

"Well, Halle, it seems like people think everybody is crazy but them until they're about to be put in the penitentiary—then all of sudden, they want to be crazy, too."

The house was full of Sunday quiet that morning with Mama at church and Sammy still asleep. Daddy wasn't in the mood to talk much. He was tired I reckoned, not having much sleep and all. But he was getting older, too. It made me sad to think about getting older, and there never seemed to be time anymore, either—not to fly kites or go fishing together or anything. I sat there for a long time on the back steps thinking about it all, feeling the first chill of autumn in the August morning breeze. Through the screen door I could hear the rattle of Daddy reading the newspaper—the only sound that broke complete silence.

Geneva Futral took down her sign and moved away from Cottonton and I never had my palm read, and Harold Links put an end to the mysterious cross in the church window when he stole the fuse box that night. Sammy would soon be going back to Newville to start to fifth grade. Willie would go to Atlanta to live with relatives, to be lost from us forever. School was about to start, summer was almost over. So was childhood. The moon turned blood red and disappeared one night in late August, but the world didn't end that summer or the next—not for me anyway. But Sammy died of leukemia before he saw another summer, and after that, I knew the reason for the craziness of it all.



